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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 13 September 2010

Lundi 13 septembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 13 September 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 13 septembre 2010

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

EVENTS IN ELGIN-MIDDLESEX- LAMBTON

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome everyone back. I think you may have noticed that instead of bringing the teacher an apple on the first day, I brought you a delicious Honeycrisp apple from Rokeby's farm in the riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London. The Honeycrisp, in my opinion, is the best apple grown in Ontario today.

On the same topic of my riding, you'll notice that you also have a flyer for the International Plowing Match, which will be held in Elgin the week of September 21 to 25. I hope to see you all there. I can tell you that my community is very excited to welcome you all.

You will also notice, at the request of members, that you each have received Ontario road maps on your desk for when you and your colleagues are talking about communities from across Ontario; you can easily reference them from your seats. As well, it will help to guide you to the lovely riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London.

SERVICES FOR THE HEARING- IMPAIRED

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just like to note, in moving forward and in trying to be compliant with the disabilities act, we now have closed captioning available in the Speaker's gallery for members' guests and visitors who will be here requiring those services.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It's my pleasure today to introduce in the House an employee of my office: Christine Charette.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce Jacob Manfle. He's a Queen's University graduate who is starting at my constituency office as well as here at Queen's Park. Welcome, Jacob.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to introduce, in the members' west gallery, a number of guests. I'm not going to guess all the names because I'm going to get one wrong

and I'm probably going to forget two. I want to say, first of all, welcome, on behalf of NAN communities. They're here today in regards to Bill 191. We have with us, in no particular order, Grand Chief Stan Beardy of Nishnawbe Aski Nation; Grand Chief Stan Louttit, from Mushkegowuk Tribal Council; and Arthur Moore, who represents the Matawa folk. I'm going to skip all the other names because I know I'm going to get them wrong, but you're all welcome.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In the west members' gallery, we have three guests from York University: Stan Shapson, the vice-president of research; Barb Burrows; and Karen Kraft Sloan, who, members may remember, was a long-time member of Parliament for York North.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to welcome Marnie Niemi Hood, who is the newly appointed OPSEU legislative liaison. Welcome to the chamber.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'd like to welcome a delegation from China, representing the Minister of Finance. This delegation was organized by the Bond Centre for Leadership and Management. They've come to study finance in the province of Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is for the Premier. Last week, Premier, you said, "It's not too soon for us to consider the choice we're going to have next October." I could not agree more. But where Dalton and I disagree is on what choice Ontario families will face in the next provincial election. Dalton McGuinty believes that families have an endless ability to pay for every idea he dreams up and passes down the bill.

The Ontario PCs will stand on the side of hard-working Ontario families who have to deal with the \$1,000 HST tax grab alone. Premier, you hit them with the HST, the eco tax, higher auto insurance and hydro rate hikes. How did you become so dramatically out of touch with the needs of Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's good to be back, Speaker, it's good to be back. It's good to hear from my honourable colleague, and I welcome all members back to the Legislature.

I want to remind my honourable colleague of just a little bit of his record in this Legislature. When we moved ahead with the personal income tax cut for Ontario fam-

ilies, which means that on average every mother and father will get a \$200 permanent annual tax cut, he voted against that. When we moved ahead with our new sales tax credit that could benefit a four-person family \$1,040 every year on a permanent basis, they voted against that. The northern Ontario energy credit, for example—\$200 for a family—again my honourable colleague voted against that. He says he's in favour of helping out families when it comes to dollars, but apparently he's not.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, quite frankly, I think that shows how dramatically out of touch—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order. Order, Minister of Economic Development and the member from Nepean—Carleton and the member from Simcoe North and the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker.

Frankly, Premier, that kind of answer just shows how dramatically out of touch you and the Ontario Liberal caucus have become with Ontario families.

Let's look at what happened to Ontario families this summer. Dalton McGuinty nailed them on the HST, and then he brought in an eco tax on 9,000 items that families use each and every day. Hydro bills are going through the roof, tuition is up, auto insurance is up. And then Dalton McGuinty throws out this \$50 tax credit on things that became more expensive because of his HST. Sir, that is no tax credit; that is an insult to hard-working Ontario families who got stuck with the bill.

Let me ask the Premier again: What kind of world do you live in where you believe it's okay for Ontario families to pay more and more and get less and less in return?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again my honourable colleague's words would have us conclude one thing, but his actions speak volumes and lead us in another direction entirely. He says that he's in favour of helping out families. Shortly we'll be introducing in this Legislature a provision to provide families with a children's activity tax credit.

My honourable colleague says he wants to help out families, but I'd have to make the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew and the member from Nepean—Carleton will please come to order, and the member from Simcoe—Grey as well, and the member from Halton and the member from Timmins—James Bay. Thank you for allowing me to refresh my memory with the riding names.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, it's a modest provision. It will provide some modest help to families, but we believe that families in fact welcome this additional support. I think that shortly we're going to learn where the official opposition stands on this particular matter. Are they going to support this government's continuing

efforts to help Ontario families or not? Will they support the new children's tax credit or not? Shortly we'll learn a bit more about that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, let's get this straight: You slapped down the HST on things like arenas that are driving up the cost of hockey registration, on baseball fields, on gas for parents to get to the games. You increased taxes like that to the tune of up to \$1,000 for your HST and then you have the nerve to throw back some cheap \$50 tax credit. It's an insult to Ontario families, Premier, and you know it.

After seven years it has become very clear: Premier McGuinty believes in his heart that Ontario families have an infinite capacity to pay for every idea that your team dreams up. They can't keep up with your hydro bills; they can't keep up with your HST increase; they can't keep up with your eco taxes. Families need a break today, and, Premier, why don't you get it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've provided a brief list—there's much more—with respect to new initiatives that support families when it comes to their taxes, but here's another measure that we've moved ahead with, which the official opposition continues to oppose: We cut the price of generic drugs in Ontario in half. That's a very important measure for Ontario families. This was a very good opportunity to learn whether they're on the side of big business or Ontario families. They've decided to stand up with big pharmacies against the interests of Ontario families. If Ontario families want to know whose side they're on, I'd ask them to cast their minds to the issue of drug costs in Ontario. We lowered them. They want to keep them up.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Let's look at Dalton McGuinty's so-called priorities for Ontario families. You began this spring with a sex ed curriculum that would start sex classes with six-year-olds at a time they would begin learning their ABCs and how to tie their shoes. Then you brought in the HST tax grab. By the way, since Dalton McGuinty nailed families with his HST tax grab, we have lost some 60,000 full-time private sector jobs in the last two months alone. You brought in an eco tax that put a tax on 9,000 items that families use each and every day like bath soap and bath toys for their kids, and a green energy experiment that has enormously increased the size of the bureaucracy and increased bills up and up and up. Premier, why don't you just call it off on all these tax grabs and give families a chance to catch a breath?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague has a particularly distorted view of families. He sees them as nothing more and nothing less than an economic enterprise concerned exclusively with revenues and expenditures. We understand that costs and family budgeting are

very important to our families, and that's why we've moved ahead with a number of tax cuts.

But I would argue, as well, that our families are very concerned about the education of their children. We're moving ahead with a brand new initiative, the first of its kind in North America: full-day kindergarten for our four- and five-year-olds. They oppose that. They call it a frill. They say it is big, shiny, unnecessary and too expensive.

We're going to continue to invest in the future of this province by investing in our children. That's something Ontario families should know: When it comes to their children and their schools, we're on their side.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me try to bring the Premier back to the real world, because Dalton McGuinty simply does not understand the world that Ontario families live in any longer.

While Ontario families are working hard and playing by the rules, this summer saw Dalton McGuinty's hand-picked friends at the LHINs hold illegal meetings, collect bloated salaries, hand out sweetheart consulting deals and try to close down health services across this province. And instead of taking this on, the Premier defends his bloated LHIN bureaucracy. He won't stand up for patients who are now waiting 17 hours for ER care in places like London, Ontario. We'd close down those LHINs and put that money into front-line health care instead.

Premier, why don't you give up on all this waste out there, help invest in front-line services first, and give Ontario families the break and the high quality of services they work so hard for and need?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: What my honourable colleague is proposing is that he will shut down 14 LHINs. He wants to revive the extensive government bureaucracy that was there in the past: all the regional health offices, all the district health councils.

Let's understand what their record is when it comes to health care—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague, of late, has not been so front-and-centre with his plan, which remains very solid, which is to eliminate the Ontario health premium. That's \$3 billion.

I need people to understand that when they were in government they closed 28 hospitals. We're building 14 new hospitals; they closed 28 hospitals. They fired 6,200 nurses; we've hired over 10,000 nurses and over 2,300 doctors. So when this gentleman gets up and talks about health care, Ontario families better ask themselves what their secret agenda is when it comes to their health care and what's going to happen to their hospitals, their nurses and their doctors.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Ontario families know that this is an election year, and they've seen Dalton McGuinty's act before. This is a man who will promise anything, say anything, to try to maintain his power in the province of Ontario. But what Dalton McGuinty forgets is that Ontario families are the ones who have to pay for each and every one of the ideas he dreams up. He wants to talk about his pie-in-the-sky ideas, his out-of-touch priorities like the sex ed curriculum, while there is an immediate and pressing need for Ontario families today to get a break so they can catch up; so they can spend money in the local economy; so they can help create jobs again.

1050

Premier, this summer we saw what you're all about: the HST, an eco tax grab on 9,000 items that families use every day, hydro rates going through the roof, and paying more and getting less in auto insurance. Premier, you're out of touch. You've lost touch with families in our province. We need change in the province of Ontario because we can't afford—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Durham. Member from Lanark. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's nothing quite as invigorating as a spontaneous standing ovation, Speaker.

I read this summer—and I'll give my colleague an opportunity to speak to this at some point in time—that their plan ultimately is to cut taxes in Ontario by \$8 billion. I would ask Ontarians to understand the consequences of that kind of tax cut.

I want to revisit their record again. In order to do what they did before, they closed 28 hospitals. They closed 7,100 beds. They fired 6,200 nurses. Funding went down for our schools by \$1 billion in the first two years. We lost 26 million learning days. If my honourable colleague wants to talk about movies we've seen before, we have seen that one. Ontarians gave it a thumbs-down. There's no desire to revisit—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. During the Premier's summer of discontent, flip-flops were in abundance. He backed away from the eco fees that he had created. He embraced an online gambling scheme that he had earlier rejected.

In the meantime, I went out and listened to the people the Premier has been ignoring. You know what, Speaker? They told me that they're worried about jobs. They're worried about hospital cuts. But most of all, they're worried about being able to make ends meet. When will

the Premier start looking after their needs and make their lives a little bit more affordable?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I extend a welcome to my honourable colleague the leader of the NDP as well.

She now has an apparent interest in the economics of our families. So why did she stand up against all of those measures that we've put in place that would support our families? The NDP claim to have a real interest in lower-income Ontarians. Why did she vote against our Ontario child benefit? That's \$1,100 on an annual basis for every child in a lower-income family. That's real; it's meaningful. It's the first of its kind in Canada. We're very proud of that but, most importantly, families who receive that are very appreciative. Why would my honourable colleague not stand up today and say that she supports the Ontario child benefit for Ontario families?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier promised that his new 8% tax on everything from gas to home heating to haircuts was actually going to make life better for families. Instead, job growth has stagnated and incomes have flat-lined as the harmonized sales tax and skyrocketing energy costs put the squeeze on already stretched family budgets. Why does this Premier seem so intent on making life more expensive for Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would ask that my honourable colleague be a bit more fulsome in terms of the answer that she provides. That would be helpful. By that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier, withdraw the comment, please.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I withdraw that, Speaker.

I would ask my honourable colleague to consider that the fact of the matter—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew will withdraw the comment as well, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: There's a Johnny Cash concert coming up. I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'd ask my honourable colleague to acknowledge that the Ontario recovery is in fact under way. It is not as strong as any of us would like to see. We have regained some 85% of the jobs we lost during the course of the recession, but there is more work to be done.

An important dimension of that recovery is to be found in our Open Ontario plan. An important part of that plan is the modernization of our tax system, and part of that is the HST. That's just part of a plan which also sees personal income taxes going down, it sees transition benefits in place, it sees the creation of a new sales tax credit, it sees the creation of a new northern energy tax credit, and it sees the creation of new benefits for Ontario seniors.

If it's seen in a holistic way, a comprehensive way, it's actually an intelligent approach to helping get this economy moving and to ensuring that we're creating more jobs every single day.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier often talks about what he can't do for families. He says his government can't afford to help families in uncertain times, but the Premier found billions of dollars for a sweetheart deal with Samsung, billions for a smart meter scheme that's really not that very smart and billions more for a corporate tax giveaway.

With all this money at the Premier's disposal, why does life keep getting more and more expensive for Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's the first time I hear it from the leader of the NDP, but I am surprised to hear that she's standing against the Green Energy Act in Ontario. I'm surprised that she's standing against an investment of some \$16 billion so far which translates into about 16,000 new Ontario jobs. Our target is 50,000 new jobs in clean energy. We made a decision some time ago to shut down coal-fired generation; it would be nice to have my colleague's support in that area.

What we're doing is actually finding a way to move ahead with strengthening this economy at the same time as protecting our environment, which means protecting the health and well-being of our families and especially our children. We think that's important; we think that's a priority that Ontario families share. Again, I would say to my honourable colleague, it would be great to have her support when it comes to shutting down coal-fired generation and harnessing power from the wind and the sun in the province of Ontario.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. If the Premier just stepped outside of his bubble, he'd hear stories like this one from Jennifer Donais of Windsor. She wrote, "I am a single mom with two teens. I live from paycheck to paycheck. When I opened my utility bill, it ... led to tears. I would have to remove money from each of the bills just so I could pay some ... and still have some money" left over "for groceries."

The cost of living is reducing women like Jennifer to tears. Does the Premier think it's acceptable that moms are forced to choose between putting food on the table for their kids and paying the hydro bill?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think Ontarians are coming to understand that what we inherited by way of an electricity system was old and unreliable, and that burning all that coal was just not helpful to our environment and to our health. So for seven years now we have been investing heavily in the rebuild of our electricity system. We're building something that is modern, reliable and clean. There are costs associated with that, and I know that my colleague understands that.

That's why we've gone ahead with a personal income tax cut: \$200 for that woman. If she finds herself in a low income bracket as a family, there's the Ontario child benefit, \$1,100 every year; a transition benefit for the

family, \$1,000 this year; and the new sales tax credit, \$260 per person for everybody in the family—that is permanent, every single year. Our new children's activity tax credit on top of that is \$50 per child, permanent every year and growing with the cost of living.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier often muses about what he can't do, but what's happening to families in this province is not inevitable; it's the result of the Premier's out-of-touch policies. Pam Carr from Kingston tells us how "our Hydro One bill doubled from June to July." Sergio Zholudev says that his hydro bill jumped more than \$100 to \$395 in August.

Families are increasingly overburdened. Does the Premier understand their plight at all, or does he just not care?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to come back to our determined effort to modernize the tax system in Ontario. I want to take the opportunity again to thank all of the Conservative members of Parliament, Ontario senators and the Stephen Harper government for their unrelenting support in that regard.

I also want to remind my honourable colleague what the Centre for Policy Alternatives said. With respect to our package of reforms, they wrote, "The tax credits and tax cuts have the effect of offsetting the impact of the increased HST revenue for low-income and moderate-income families and of moderating the impact for other families." They called the report Not a Tax Grab After All. I think that says it all.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

1100

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People see big, mind-boggling money spent on hydro—billions in sweetheart deals for companies like Samsung, millions in salaries for hydro bureaucrats, billions to start up a smart-meter system—yet real people are shocked by what they see when they open their bill. Ms. Sikora from Hamilton says this: "My hydro bill jumped from \$118.72 from the previous billing to \$216.36. That is almost \$100." When will the Premier come up with some relief for people like her?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to speak to my honourable colleague about the work that we continue to have under way with respect to hydro. I know she's not arguing that we don't need to rebuild our hydro system; I know that she's not arguing that there are no costs associated with that rebuild. We've already brought 8,000 megawatts of new generation online; 80% of that is new, clean electricity. That cost \$8 billion. We also rebuilt some 5,000 kilometres of transmission upgrades. That cost some \$4 billion. There are real costs associated with that.

We've worked really hard to offset those new costs, again, by reducing taxes for our families—the personal income tax cut, the transition benefit, the new sales tax credit, the children's activity tax credit, the northern Ontario energy credit and so many more.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. Ontario families wonder how you can collect a health tax and still end up closing emergency rooms. People have waited for years to get their parents into long-term care and wonder why you boast about increasing health care spending by 45% while they get less service.

Dr. Jeff Turnbull, the new president of the Canadian Medical Association, appears to have answers. He is quoted as saying, "It's not a lack of resources.... It's a glaring failure of execution."

Was Dr. Turnbull talking about eHealth, local health integration networks, you and your health minister, or the hospitals the auditor looked at and is going to be reporting on in the days to come?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think an important question, really, that we need to address and my honourable colleagues need to come to grips with, in terms of explaining to Ontarians what it is that they would like to do, is, when they remove that \$3 billion annually from our health care budget, what will that translate into? Because last time it meant the closure of 28 hospitals. I juxtapose that against our building of 14 new hospitals in Ontario. They fired 6,200 nurses; we've hired over 10,000 nurses. We've also hired over 2,300 more doctors. When you take \$3 billion out of health care, I think we need to know what exactly will that mean to our health care system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Ontario families certainly do have a choice: between Dalton McGuinty, who believes in his heart that they have an endless ability to pay, and Tim Hudak, who hears what the Canadian Medical Association says about waste.

Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs warned you about eHealth, but you did nothing about rich contracts to your Liberal friends until it was too late. We warned you about waste and secrecy at the LHINs, but you ignored us until the Ombudsman exposed the illegal meetings you let them hold. We warned you about the spending spree on Courtyard, Accenture and other Liberal-friendly consultants that continued at the hospitals.

Will the Premier show he has changed and reveal how many of the contracts to his friends at Courtyard and Accenture were sole-sourced before the auditor releases his report?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's one thing that I must say with respect to consultants: When we came into office, the use of consultants was a practice that was rampant in the government. We have a tremendous amount of faith in our public servants. They are capable, and we rely on them.

We have, in fact, reduced government-wide use of consultants by more than 54% since 2003. In just the last year alone, the use of consultants is down by 25%; travel expenses are down by 23%; government advertising spending is down 20%. Again, we're comparing that to

the previous Conservative government. Costs have gone up; notwithstanding that, consultants are down 25%, travel expenses are down 23%, government advertising is down 20%.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Premier: This government has once again caved in to the insurance lobby with deep cuts to benefits for auto accident victims. Rehab and medical benefits have been cut in half. The auto insurance industry is going to pocket millions of dollars in claim savings, while individuals are going to be left unprotected and vulnerable. Why does this government insist on favouring more profits for powerful financial interests at the expense of Canadians and Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government wants to build on its record of bringing down premiums and keeping them lower for all Ontarians.

The member opposite conveniently ignores the facts. The facts are that for seven years auto insurance rates came down. We moved with 41 recommendations to end fraud and abuse in the system, to give consumers more choices, to build in security for consumers so that they could rest assured that they'd get better insurance at a reasonable cost.

Under the NDP government, premiums went up; under the Conservative government, they went up 53% in two years. Neither one of those parties gets it. This is about balance, it's about finding the right answer, and most of all it's about protecting consumers from fraud and abuse in the insurance system. We'll put our record up against yours, sir, any day of the week.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Let's see: Higher premiums, reduced benefits—that's not much of a choice for insured automobile drivers.

The reality is that accident victims are going to end up looking for treatment in the public health care system and then they're going to be amazed to find that services like chiropractic have been delisted by this same government. As a result, these victims are going to be forced to pay out of pocket, and all of this at a time of rising insurance premiums.

Why has this government once again caved in to the powerful auto insurance lobby and, in the course of doing so, betrayed innocent victims and Ontario's drivers?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Under that member's government, auto insurance premiums went up 20%. Under their plan, we would have had 23,000 new bureaucrats working in the public auto insurance sector.

Quite frankly, I watched that member some 22 years ago do a 36-hour—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I think you should stop that stuff.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I watched him do a 36-hour filibuster in favour of public auto insurance. He stood

and he did it with great passion. And what did he do, when given the chance and that party came to office? They didn't do it. What did they do? They raised auto insurance premiums.

We are fighting fraud in the system, giving consumers more choice and building on the success we've had in keeping auto insurance premiums down. This government is all about protecting consumers with a wise and well-thought-out package of insurance reforms that will give them enhanced protection and less fraud in their system.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, full-day kindergarten has recently begun in schools across the province with 35,000 students in over 1,400 classes, and almost 600 schools across the province will offer full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds.

The full-day kindergarten program has seen widespread support, but the member from Nepean—Carleton and her caucus colleagues showed opposition to the plan. The member said, "When I asked the minister if it was still possible for children to go half-day, I was told by Minister Dombrowsky that, 'no,' there wouldn't be choice...."

Can the minister tell this House about her plan, whether she is keeping the choice for families or has cancelled it?

1110

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm delighted to have the opportunity to talk about our government's initiative that has 35,000 four- and five-year-olds in the province of Ontario attending full-day kindergarten this year. This is a great program.

I can say that with respect to parents' choice and the opportunities that they have, the law has not changed. It has always been the law in the province of Ontario that children are not required to be in school until they are the age of six. That has not changed. There continues to be a choice for parents and families.

When I was at the member's riding last week, I met a parent who had a child in the classroom. I asked about her child: Was she going to be attending? The mother said that because the child is a little younger, she will be attending on Fridays only for the first little while, until the youngster gets used to it. So I commend schools that are working with families—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Minister. My second question is looking at extended care. This government led the people of Ontario to believe that extended care was going to be available at all the schools that were offering full-day kindergarten. However, reports say that the take-up of extended care is lower than expected across the province. Would the minister tell us why the number is

lower and why the extended care is not being offered at all the schools that offer full-day learning?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: We know that there's a great deal of excitement about the wraparound programs that have been available in some schools and are now coming onstream in others. What we have said with our legislation is that it is enabling legislation. So in those communities where we have full-day kindergarten parents have the opportunity, and where there are sufficient numbers boards will be required to provide that service.

This is the first program of its kind anywhere in the world. We know that as more and more families are availing themselves of this service it will spread to communities right across our province. It is a wonderful initiative where we have an early childhood educator and a teacher with children for an entire day, from 7 in the morning until 6 at night. We are just beginning and we're very pleased with what parents have told us and how they—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you, Speaker.

Applause.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I hope that wasn't for the injury.

My question is for the Premier. Not only was this the hottest summer on record, Premier, but it was Dalton McGuinty's sneakiest summer on record. You were the first leader to use one greedy tax grab as cover for another greedy tax grab when you tried to sneak in eco taxes on 9,000 new products on the same day as the HST came into effect. When you got caught in the eco tax fiasco you just shrugged and said you were still learning. Did you mean you're learning that Ontario families don't have an infinite ability to pay or learning how to sneak tax grabs past them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of the Environment. It's his first time up.

Hon. John Wilkinson: And I'm delighted to rise to answer the question as the Minister of the Environment.

I say to my colleague opposite that I've had an opportunity to talk to my constituents, and they tell me increasingly that they want to ensure that hazardous materials in their house never get into the landfill. That is our objective and I think we should all agree to that: that it is so important that we keep hazardous materials out of our landfills.

What the consumers have told us is that they want to have a program that's easy to understand so they can do the right thing. I'm convinced, as the Minister of the Environment, that people do want to do the right thing. That's why we're in the midst of a review, and I can assure the member opposite that I'll be sharing with the House the fruits of that review after I speak to my colleagues about it. But we will ensure that hazardous material stays out of our landfill, and I would hope that

you would join us in agreeing that that is the most important consideration.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Déjà vu from that minister if ever there was one.

Cabinet documents and leaks reveal that Dalton McGuinty has been working at being sneaky for some time. One leak revealed that it was Dalton McGuinty, not the hapless Minister Gerretsen, who was pushing eco taxes over the objections of the cabinet. Cabinet records reveal that Dalton McGuinty tried to slip the secret G20 law through the same meeting where everyone was pre-occupied with regulatory changes for the greedy HST tax grab. Soon Dalton McGuinty was on a roll, with the Ombudsman revealing that LHINs hold secret illegal meetings and the OPP revealing how busy they were raiding ministries and agencies.

Why is Dalton McGuinty so intent on tax grabs and experiments with tax dollars that he'd rather sneak them in than explain them to the hard-working Ontario families who have to pay for them?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a second, please. Order. On a number of occasions I allowed language that should be unparliamentary, and I would just ask our own member to withdraw the word that he used. I will not be allowing it to be used in the future. Please stand.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: This government will never stop protecting our environment—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Lanark. Thank you.

Hon. John Wilkinson: For greater emphasis, this government will never stop protecting our environment for our children and our grandchildren. I can't think of anything that our parents are more concerned about than ensuring that we have a safe environment. We want to leave a safer environment.

At our ministry, we protect the air, the land and our water each and every day. We will continue to build on a strong legacy. We inherited a system where clean water wasn't important, where clean air wasn't important and where people were dumping things in the landfills that should never have been there. We're going to continue to do our work and make sure that we are protecting the environment for our children and our grandchildren. Surely to God, all of us should be able to agree on that.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. Ontario parents are paying an indirect education tax of \$600 million in the form of fundraising and user fees. This tax is being used for items that include classroom supplies, library books, renovations and capital projects, and you have allowed this to go on for years.

When will the government issue a clear directive to school boards, that fundraising is not to be used for items that should be provided by the Ministry of Education?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I've made it very clear, and I've restated and reminded boards as recently as two weeks ago, when this item came into the media, that at no time should students in the province of Ontario be required to pay fees for any item, any article that relates to their program.

I think it is important as well to put some context on the number that was put out with respect to fundraising. We know in our schools that there are many reasons why they raise funds, and I think that it's inaccurate to suggest that the total aggregate number that the member cited in his question is driven back into the schools. In fact, much of it is charity; much of it is fundraising for school trips.

Mr. Paul Miller: Charity?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: And when I say charity, absolutely. I say that many children in our schools, for example, most recently—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister, I just want you to know that People for Education did their study as we did. We came up with the same numbers. If you're saying that People for Education doesn't know what they're saying or doing, that's fine, but you might want to look at their study and you might want to ask us for ours.

You ought to know that individual schools are able to raise anything from zero dollars to \$200,000. Our calculations show the school boards raise on average about \$341 per student, with a range going from as low as \$169 to a high of \$744 per student. This dependence on fees and fundraising has created a system of haves and have-nots.

Minister, as you move towards an American-style education system and more and more schools become dependent on private money, what are you going to do for the have-not schools?

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Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I would say to the honourable member that we have raised spending in education by 40% and that every student in the province of Ontario is funded with the same number of dollars, with the exception of those students in rural and northern communities. Where there are exceptions that need to be supported, we drive dollars to those issues.

With respect to fees and fundraising, we have developed draft guidelines, working with our partners. The draft guidelines for fees are on our website. The ones for fundraising will be out in the new year.

I can say, as well, that there are many school initiatives where funds are raised to support local community events and endeavours, where students raise funds for school trips. We want to look at how dollars are raised in our school communities and, yes, we do want to work with parents and ask them how and what they think is appropriate to support in our schools.

What I can say is that there has been unprecedented investment—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Mario Sergio: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Minister, with the recession that has so badly affected many Ontarians, a number of people are returning to school to increase their level of education or train for a new skilled trade. More and more Ontarians recognize that it is imperative that they have the skills and education to compete for the best jobs. Many reports suggest that seven out of 10 new jobs in the next decade will require post-secondary education or training.

In order to return to school, many students will need to take out student loans to pay for their education. Minister, students navigating loan programs spend more time figuring out how they will pay for their education and less time actually studying. They are the next generation who will support and contribute to our economy, and we'll be relying on them to keep Ontario strong and competitive.

Hon. John Milloy: I think it's very timely, at the start of the school year, that we talk about some of the changes that have taken place in post-secondary education across the province. Indeed, I've had an opportunity to meet with students across the province over the last few weeks to talk about these changes, particularly in the area of student assistance.

Not only has this government made significant financial changes to OSAP, we've also made some administrative changes to eliminate much of the red tape associated with the OSAP process. For example, there is the student access guarantee, which mandates colleges and universities to provide additional funding to high-needs students in programs that have additional costs. In the past, in many cases, students had to fill out separate application forms. It's now automatic under the OSAP system.

At the same time, two of our other programs, the Ontario access grant and distance grant, again, supplementary—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Mario Sergio: We need more than a streamlined OSAP application process to help these students with their studies. I had parents in my area contacting me and asking about the government's plans for making post-secondary education more affordable for their children, parents who want to give their children the opportunity to pursue post-secondary education.

Parents realize how important it is for the future prosperity of their children's lives to go on to college and university. York University, in my riding, is one of the largest universities in Ontario. I need to be able to say with pride, when students and parents come to speak to

me, that, yes, this government does care about Ontarians and their families. I need to reassure parents that their children will have the same opportunities they have had with post-secondary education.

Minister, can you please tell us—tell me, so I can tell these families when they ask how this government—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: We listened to the students of Ontario and made significant new investments in OSAP. In fact, the most recent budget contained \$81 million in additional funding for the OSAP program.

Among the changes that we made to make the program more generous, we are providing more assistance for tuition, living costs, books, supplies and equipment; allowing students to keep more of the money they earn from part-time jobs; providing a no-interest, no-payment period on student loans for six months after graduation; providing additional support for married students and students with children; introducing a new grant for part-time students; and also, perhaps most importantly, offering students a more flexible and income-sensitive repayment program. Under this new program, no borrower will be asked to pay more than 20% of their family income toward student loans, and after 15 years, or 10 years for borrowers with a permanent—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Premier. This summer, the Premier said his government has been sloppy and messy, particularly with respect to his failed and greedy eco tax grab.

The Premier used to say, “Public hearings”; those two words go together nicely if you believe in true democracy.” But without listening to northern Ontario families, you are pushing ahead with Bill 191, which freezes development in all of northern Ontario.

Your apology for the eco tax fiasco made it appear that you had learned and that you were ready to make changes. Why, Premier, are you still pressing your own priorities rather than the priorities of northern Ontario families?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm really pleased to answer this question.

I want to welcome all the chiefs who join us today. I've had an opportunity to visit many of their communities. This summer, I got to visit many communities, and I appreciate the hospitality and all the advice that they provided—particularly Grand Chief Stan Beardy, who provided a lot of recommendations that we will be looking at in clause-by-clause consideration today. His advice was invaluable in making sure that we provided guidance on how we would move forward with the Far North Act.

It's a key commitment of our government, and it's going to be part of our Open Ontario plan. It's a particu-

larly historic piece of legislation, and I look forward to having those discussions later on this afternoon. It's about working with First Nations communities, allowing them to direct land use planning in the north and having respect for the land that they call their home.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the Premier: You've failed to offer any solutions for this failed and abject leadership that led to the cancellation of public hearings on the Far North Act. Now you intend to ram a bill through this House that cuts off 50% of northern Ontario from development.

The Ontario PC caucus is standing up for northern Ontario, and today we will call for unanimous consent for public hearings on Bill 191. I know Bill 191 is making your back bench nervous; just turn around and ask. Ontario's First Nations are here in the House today asking for their voices to be heard.

Premier, will your government vote to hold public hearings and let those most hurt by your failed leadership have a say in the Far North?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: When it comes to developing the Far North, they just don't get it. They don't understand that this is about protecting the environment; this is about looking for a balance.

I have great confidence in this piece of legislation. I believe it is legislation that will provide the resources and the capacity for Far North communities to participate in land use planning. In fact, just last week, we announced \$10 million of additional funding that will go to capacity- and skills-based training, allowing the communities to participate in land use planning.

It's the right thing to do. It's about giving authority to First Nations communities to land use plan. They will have the authority. They will have the final approval on land use planning that they direct.

There are lots of communities in the Far North that need this. They have told me—the elders, the youth, the chiefs—that they are in favour of development. This gives them the tools to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the Minister of Natural Resources on the same issue: The Premier made a commitment last spring with NAN when they met at the Delta Chelsea hotel, and that was that this government would not go forward with amendments, or go forward in any way, shape or form, on Bill 191 without the consent of First Nations. It's clear that there is not a First Nation in the Far North that wants your legislation. They're here today, the grand chiefs and chiefs from various communities, to say, “No, put this on hold.”

Are you going to hold the commitment of the Premier and not go forward with this legislation, as promised by him to First Nations last year?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I have visited about eight Far North communities this summer, and I was disappointed when the standing committee wasn't able to visit the Far North, but it became an opportunity for me to visit those communities first-hand. I was able to spend whole days in communities and look at the land use planning that a lot of communities have already done. We have some communities that are far into the process and some that are just beginning that process.

We have a lot of youth who need skills-based training. They need the dollars; they need the capacity. We can put our head in the sand, or we can understand that there is development happening in the Far North today.

We have a chromite deposit that we've discovered in the Far North, and the world is watching what we do. We need to do land use planning in the north similar to the way we do it in the south. We need to give the Far North communities the resources to move forward so we can protect the environment and find a balance on land use planning in the north.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, the only one with its head in the sand is the Liberal government when it comes to this issue. It is clear: Each and every community residing in the Far North, in the area that you're trying to affect by this act, has sent you resolutions by band council. They've had resolutions sent to your office and to the Premier's office, along with petitions, saying, "Stop this process." They want to ensure that, in the end, if an act does come forward, it is one that will meet with their consent.

I ask you again, will you do the right thing and stop this legislation in its tracks and allow the First Nations to do what needs to be done so that we can actually get it right?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I guess I want to convince everybody today, if I could, that this is just the beginning of the conversation. I think we've had conversations for the last two years about this legislation. We've met with communities that want to do land use planning. We continue to want to have that conversation, but it is a little disheartening—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. We have guests here who want to hear the answer.

Minister.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Bill 191 represents a change in the working relationship between First Nations and Ontario in the Far North. If passed, this bill will provide a new approach to land use planning, one of co-operation and joint responsibility. It's about community-land-based planning that is initiated by a First Nations community, and will have final approval, should it be approved.

That's historic in the way that we have approached this in the past. It's based on advice that we received from chiefs in the Far North. I was listening to them. We

continue to listen to them. This is a dialogue. This is not the end of the process; this is just the beginning.

CANADIAN CENSUS

RECENSEMENT CANADIEN

Mr. Bob Delaney: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, this summer, the federal government announced that they would eliminate the mandatory long-form census. The federal government's decision has resulted in a loud outcry from individuals in western Mississauga and across Ontario.

For years, community and social services groups have depended on the long census information to develop programs to serve their measurable population segments. Mississauga–Streetsville social service providers such as the Peel Multicultural Council have relied on the long-form census to identify high-needs immigrant communities that require services in such languages as Urdu, Punjabi, Dari, Bengali, Russian, Spanish and Romanian in a culturally appropriate manner.

Would the minister tell the House how the federal government's decision to end the long-form census will hurt Ontario's ability to serve our newcomers?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm very concerned that the federal government is proceeding to eliminate the long-form census, particularly without consulting with the Ontario government, Ontarians and the thousands of organizations that depend on the census data. By ending the long-form census, Ontario will no longer have information about newcomers' place of birth, their ethnicity, their education or their income levels. Without reliable, accurate information of this sort, captured only by the long-form census, Ontario will be less able to develop and deliver programs that help our newcomers succeed.

On behalf of all Ontarians, and particularly Ontario's newcomers, I once again urge the federal government to reconsider this ill-advised decision to end the long-form census. We need to count our newcomers so that they can count on us. When our newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M. Bob Delaney: La décision du gouvernement fédéral affecte toutes les communautés, les nouveaux arrivants comme les francophones. Dans ma circonscription, j'ai reçu plusieurs messages des francophones qui s'inquiètent et qui m'ont demandé la position de notre gouvernement sur cette question. Je sais que cette inquiétude est partagée par d'autres francophones partout en Ontario.

Quelle est la position de notre province et de notre gouvernement concernant l'annonce du gouvernement fédéral? Quel est le risque pour les résidents de Streetsville, Lisgar, Meadowvale et toutes les communautés partout en Ontario?

L'hon. Eric Hoskins: Je réfère la question à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Premièrement, je voudrais remercier le député de Mississauga–Streetsville

pour sa question. Je partage vraiment l'inquiétude de ses commettants. En plus, un article dans le *Globe and Mail* du 9 septembre confirmait que Statistique Canada pense qu'un recensement volontaire sera source d'erreurs. Je suis donc surprise et inquiète de la décision du gouvernement fédéral, moi aussi.

Par exemple, l'Ontario a adopté en 2009 une définition plus inclusive de « francophone » dans le but d'inclure les nouveaux arrivants dont le français est la langue d'intégration. Cette définition dépend des réponses au formulaire long du recensement. On ne pourra plus se fier aux résultats de cette enquête pour estimer précisément le nombre de francophones en Ontario. Or, ces statistiques permettent d'évaluer les besoins de—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Even before you sprung eco taxes and the HST on Ontario families on the same day, you had another trick up your sleeve: Your secret G20 law caught everyone by surprise, and of course we all know now that you made a major blunder. The regulation was used to arrest people who were walking on the sidewalk outside the security fence for the conference. It was passed while this House was still sitting, but you didn't make a peep about it. We still don't know why you tried to sneak it past us. What made you think that you can get away with this?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the member that I ruled on that word earlier. Please withdraw the comment.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I withdraw it.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would hope the member would recognize that, on that particular day—because I heard his leader talking about the police and being very supportive of what happened on that day. That was an initial reaction. They were confronted with a very, very difficult circumstance on that particular day. You will recall that—

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: He doesn't want an answer.

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Several members are interjecting over there. I'm trying to answer my good friend's excellent question. He has good questions.

I want to say to the member that it was a very difficult day. Everyone recognizes what a difficult day it was. He would know that the Ombudsman is conducting an investigation into this matter, and we will await his results and the results of two other reviews of these circumstances that are taking place at the present time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to take the opportunity today to welcome to the chamber Sarah Cannon and Gaby Wess, from Parents for Children's Mental Health. Sarah was the first person to present to the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. It's her testimony, along with that of many others, that contributed to the final recommendations. They've joined us today to witness the tabling of the final report from the committee. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And a special welcome to my constituent Gaby as well.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in the House today to raise awareness of a private member's bill that we will be debating on Thursday. The bill would amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to include at least a metre-wide paved shoulder on designated provincial highways when they are repaved. This amendment will improve public safety and promote a healthier means of transportation and activity for the public.

In my press conference last week, Eleanor McMahon, founder of Share the Road Cycling Coalition, brought the tragic death of her husband to our attention. These types of accidents can be prevented. In Australia, where shoulders have been paved, such accidents have declined significantly.

Paved shoulders would have positive benefits on health, safety and the environment. The public will be encouraged to take active transportation without fear. Cyclists, runners and walkers will all enjoy greater safety, as will motorists. There are also cost savings related to road maintenance.

Since hosting a press conference last week, I've received tremendous public support and interest in my private member's bill. In addition, I have support and encouragement from Dr. Charles Gardner, chief medical officer of health, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit; Carol Craig, of the nutrition and physical activity action team, Sudbury and District Health Unit; the Ontario Road Builders' Association; Kristi MacDonald, from the Bike Shop in Gravenhurst; Dan Andrews, from Trans Canada Trail Ontario; and Margaret Casey, on behalf of Muskoka Trails Council.

I ask all members to support my "pave the shoulders" private member's bill this Thursday.

ROSH HASHANAH

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm pleased today to extend my warmest wishes to all Ontarians observing Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, especially to the many

Jewish families and dear friends in my own riding of Eglinton–Lawrence.

In Hebrew, Rosh Hashanah means “head of the year.” It is a time for both celebration and repentance, and marks one of the holiest days in the Jewish calendar.

There are a number of customary traditions followed by those observing Rosh Hashanah. Observers listen for the shofar, or ram’s horn, which serves as a reminder of the importance of this holiday and marking the time for reflection.

The holiday includes traditional foods, such as apples and honey, to represent hope for a sweet new year. The circular shape of challah, bread baked into braids, symbolizes the continuation of life.

Ontario has been most fortunate to have had so many people of the Jewish faith live in our communities. Their contributions to all aspects of our life have enriched our province enormously.

Rosh Hashanah is a time to examine one’s life, repenting of any wrongs in the previous year, and for making amends. It is also a time to rejoice in the creation of the world and celebrate God’s compassion and mercy. For many, it is a time for renewal, of making peace and of making resolutions for the year ahead.

To all those observing Rosh Hashanah, L’Shana Tova. May you have a sweet new year filled with health, happiness and good fortune.

DAVID JOHNSTON

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I would like to take this opportunity to extend my warmest congratulations to Canada’s next Governor General, David Johnston. This appointment is confirmation of his distinguished record of public service and his excellence in leadership.

As David leaves his position as president of the University of Waterloo after 11 years at the helm, I look back at those years with joy at all his successes but also sadness that he will no longer be involved in our university and community. We have been blessed by his presence, and he has given us countless reasons to celebrate. Tomorrow, we will celebrate and gather to thank him.

One of David’s most remarkable personal attributes is that he is an enthusiastic and energetic visionary who has successfully challenged all of us, whether at the university or in the region of Waterloo, to dream big, to raise our expectations of what is possible and to work in co-operation to achieve our goals. Under his leadership, the university experienced historic accomplishments, such as the establishment of the research and technology park, the school of pharmacy, the Institute for Quantum Computing and the health sciences centre.

In closing, on behalf of everyone in the region of Waterloo, I want to express my sincere appreciation to David. Thank you for believing in us. Thank you for being our chief barn-raiser and cheerleader. Thank you for making Waterloo a better place to live and prosper.

Congratulations and warmest wishes to you and Sharon, your daughters and grandchildren as you embark on this new journey as our Governor General.

CAPITAL PRIDE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Welcome back, to all the members, to the Legislature.

It is my great honour today to recognize the 25th anniversary of the pride festival in our nation’s capital, Ottawa. From August 20 to 29 of this year, Capital Pride and the GLBTTQ community of Ottawa-Gatineau hosted a rainbow of events primarily located in my riding of Ottawa Centre.

Ottawa’s most colourful parade attracts more than 35,000 spectators and participants annually, and this year was no different. The parade runs down Wellington Street, past the Supreme Court and Parliament Hill, and ends at Ottawa city hall for the Capital Pride community fair.

For a parade which highlights equality and the diversity of our communities, it’s remarkable, when you pass by the Supreme Court and Parliament Hill, how blessed we are in the great country we live in, right here in Canada.

In Ottawa, the first gay pride celebration was organized in 1986 by GO, Gays of Ottawa. In 1989, the pride celebration became a week of activities, dances, exhibits, films, sporting events and receptions. Three hundred people attended the first parade and picnic. The then mayor of the city of Ottawa, Jim Durrell, proclaimed Equality Day.

In 1997 and 1998 respectively, Regional Chair Bob Chiarelli, now the Minister of Infrastructure, and then-Prime Minister Jean Chrétien issued a proclamation supporting the festival. The year 2002’s parade events exceeded all expectations: 55,000 people attended the parade and the street party. The parade has been going since then.

Congratulations to all organizers for their hard work.

PEACE RANCH

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to congratulate Peace Ranch on their 20th anniversary.

Peace Ranch is a beautiful heritage farm on 26 acres in Caledon. Using social and recreational rehabilitation programs through horticultural and animal-assisted therapies, Peace Ranch is dedicated to providing residential and day programs for individuals struggling to manage a serious mental illness and co-occurring addiction challenges.

Peace Ranch embraces the principles of hope, empowerment, choice and responsibility. Residents and day-program participants work on the farm and in the gardens and, through this, regain strength and dignity in their lives. The farming program has recently been expanded with the launch of Eeyore’s Market Garden.

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I've visited Peace Ranch on many occasions and have seen first-hand the wonderful work they are doing to treat individuals with a mental illness. I want to take this opportunity to thank executive director Eric Tripp-McKay and his staff, the board of directors and the many other volunteers who make such an important contribution to improving the lives of those who live and participate in programs at Peace Ranch.

The Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions gave us a unique opportunity to focus the Legislature's attention on mental health and addictions issues. I urge all members to support our recommendations so that we can improve the lives of Ontarians living with a mental illness.

Peace Ranch is a bright light in a very fractured mental health system. I offer my congratulations to Peace Ranch on their 20th anniversary and wish them many more years of success.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This summer, we've been witness to a variety of severe weather events around the world that speak to the changing climate. In Russia, an unprecedented heat wave and drought have led to the loss of almost a third of their wheat crop. Toxic air in Moscow led to the morgues overflowing. In Pakistan, almost 14 million people have been displaced by unprecedented rains and flooding. In China, flooding and landslides had impacts in the billions of dollars. Climate scientists say that it's very clear that these incidents are consistent with the kind of weather events you get in a warming world.

The McGuinty government's climate plan was weak to begin with. The clear failure to even meet its own weak targets is simply immoral. The McGuinty government, as all other governments, has a duty to act decisively and recognize the reality of what's going on in the world. There is no more pressing task facing the world and this province today.

EDUCATION

ÉDUCATION

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: It's good to be back and to see so many enthusiastic faces in this Legislature today. I think we share the excitement felt by students who have also started back to school. I'm sure that most of us have heard positive feedback from parents about the McGuinty government's full-day learning program for four- and five-year-olds.

Durant les dernières années, nous avons investi davantage dans le domaine de l'éducation. Plusieurs études ont été menées afin d'identifier les stratégies qui visent à maximiser le plein potentiel de chaque élève.

Nous remarquons dans nos écoles ontariennes l'excellence en éducation. Selon une étude complétée par le D^r Pascal, le gouvernement McGuinty offre main-

tenant une éducation à plein temps dès l'âge de quatre ans dans plus de 600 écoles en Ontario. Cette initiative a pour objectif de développer des élèves autonomes et responsables dès leur arrivée en première année, et aussi devenir des citoyens engagés qui contribueront à l'économie de notre province.

As the grandfather of three young children, I am very encouraged by the positive steps our government is taking in education.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to talk about a fail-proof investment, and I assure you this investment is a sure thing.

First, some investment basics: Don't choose to invest in something; choose to invest for something. Invest for security, for returns, for growth.

Thanks to the McGuinty government's commitment to education, we have invested for security, returns, growth and more. We have invested for higher literacy, numeracy, critical thinking and citizenship. We have invested for smaller class sizes that maximize the positive impact made by our outstanding teachers and early childhood educators. We have invested for safer and more welcoming schools, healthier students and more engaged, worry-free parents. We have invested for student achievement through new and innovative programs, programs that give our students a head start and a leg up. We have invested for the skilled workforce Ontario needs, resulting in higher family incomes, improved health and reduced social services costs. We have invested for success—which our students are realizing each day in the classroom and taking with them to the workforce.

My riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock is home to more than 40 schools represented by five different school boards. In my riding, we're seeing security, returns, growth and more. So you can see that this investment is indeed a sure thing, and you can see how honoured I am to be part of a government that invests in a strong, publicly funded education system that is the foundation for Ontario's power and prosperity.

EDUCATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: Since my first election in 2003, I've had the privilege of visiting with students in western Mississauga in their schools. I'm proud of the improvements made in classrooms and in the lives of students in Streetsville, Meadowvale and Lisgar.

Before our government was elected, it was common to see 35 kids in a grade 1 classroom. Strikes interrupted day-to-day learning and prevented students from participating in extracurricular activities that foster teamwork and build confidence in our kids. One in three students was not graduating from high school, and standardized test scores were too low to be competitive in the 21st century. That was then.

Today, seven years later, nearly all grade 1 classrooms in Meadowvale, Streetsville and Lisgar have 20 students or less; student achievement has improved; standardized test scores have been up every year; and I shake hands with more and more high school graduates every fall and every spring at commencement ceremonies.

Not a single school day has been lost to a strike in almost eight years. The full-day learning program started at Plowman's Park Public School in Meadowvale this fall, and our kids now get the best start possible.

Good schools are a commitment to our future, and Ontario's achievements in education represent a bright future for our province.

TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment the following reports were tabled: on June 15, 2010, the 2009-10 annual report of the Ombudsman of Ontario; on June 17, 2010, the 2009-10 annual report of the Office of the Integrity Commissioner; on July 27, 2010, a special report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario entitled *Getting it Right: Paying for the Management of Household Hazardous Wastes*; on August 10, 2010, from the Ombudsman of Ontario, a report regarding the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that, in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Administrator was pleased to assent to certain bills in his office on June 8, 2010.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): An Act to regulate retirement homes / Loi réglementant les maisons de retraite.

An Act to amend the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000, the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005 and the Ontario College of Art & Design Act, 2002 / Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 favorisant le choix et l'excellence au niveau postsecondaire, la Loi de 2005 sur les collèges privés d'enseignement professionnel et la Loi de 2002 sur l'École d'art et de design de l'Ontario.

An Act to implement the Northern Ontario energy credit / Loi mettant en oeuvre le crédit pour les coûts d'énergie dans le Nord de l'Ontario.

An Act respecting the care provided by health care organizations / Loi relative aux soins fournis par les organismes de soins de santé.

An Act to revive 962 Bloor Street West Limited.

An Act to revive the Durham Region Classic Mustang Club.

An Act to revive Deepa Gas Limited.

An Act to revive Sandringham Developments Ltd.

An Act respecting the Luso Canadian Charitable Society.

An Act respecting the Ontario Institute of the Purchasing Management Association of Canada Inc.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA POLITIQUE SOCIALE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du Comité permanent de la politique sociale et je propose son adoption.

I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption, and send it to you by way of page Henry.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 65, An Act to revise the law in respect of not-for-profit corporations / Projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne les organisations sans but lucratif.
1320

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 1, 2010, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 68, An Act to promote Ontario as open for business by amending or repealing certain Acts / Projet de loi 68, Loi favorisant un Ontario propice aux affaires en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 2, 2010, the bill is ordered for third reading.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Pursuant to the order of the House dated February 24, 2009, I beg leave to present the final report from the Select Committee on Mental Health

and Addictions entitled Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians. I move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Flynn presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you. I'm especially proud of this report and I think that all members of our committee are. The final report of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians, is the culmination of an intensive 18-month process. The committee was comprised of members from all three political parties, and I know all those members are especially proud of how they worked in a non-partisan way.

From February 2009 to August 2010, the committee heard the testimony of more than 230 individuals and organizations, received more than 300 written submissions and travelled across the province. We visited communities. We visited hospitals and mental health and addictions agencies. As a result of those visits, the committee concluded that a major transformation of Ontarians' mental health and addictions system is needed and has brought forward 23 recommendations to make this happen.

The members of the select committee strongly encourage the Legislature to endorse the recommendations found therein and advocate for their implementation.

We're joined today by some of the staff members who assisted in this: Elaine Campbell, Carrie Hull and, of course, Susan Sourial.

It has been an exceptional experience, one that I'm especially proud to be part of. I hope it does make a difference for some of the people who have joined us today in the chamber, especially from the Parents for Children's Mental Health.

I would move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Flynn has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY TAX CREDIT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR LES ACTIVITÉS DES ENFANTS

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit / *Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour les activités des enfants.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ministerial statements, Mr. Speaker.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT AMENDMENT ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DES VOIES PUBLIQUES ET DES TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN

Mr. Norm Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act / *Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Norm Miller: This bill will be debated this Thursday in private members' time. The bill amends the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act by requiring the Minister of Transportation to construct paved shoulders on prescribed highways. The paved shoulders must extend at least one metre from the roadway of the highway and the construction must occur when the highway or a portion it is significantly repaved or resurfaced.

I think this will be a benefit for cyclists; it will be safer for cyclists to ride. It will also be a benefit for automobile drivers to have that extra paved shoulder.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding any standing order, Mr. Sorbara be removed from the order of precedence for private members' public business and ballot item 32 be assumed by Ms. Jaczek; and that Mr. Arthurs and Mr. Rinaldi exchange places in the order of precedence such that Mr. Rinaldi assumes ballot item 28 and Mr. Arthurs assumes ballot item 37; and that Mr. Chudleigh and Mr. Bailey exchange places in the order of precedence such that Mr. Bailey assumes ballot item 29 and Mr. Chudleigh assumes ballot item 34; and that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items 28, 29, 34 and 37.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members have heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the House schedule.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 6(a), when the House adjourns on Thursday, September 16, 2010, it shall stand adjourned until Wednesday, September 22, 2010.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward another motion without notice regarding the House schedule.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, I think this is the one that you were expecting before.

I move that, notwithstanding standing order 6(a)(i), the spring sessional period of 2011 shall commence on Tuesday, February 22, 2011.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members have heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Motions?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion to rescind the government's time allocation motion on Bill 191 and allow for public consultations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Yakabuski seeks unanimous consent of the House. Agreed? I'm afraid I heard a no.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY TAX CREDIT

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm pleased to stand today in the House for the introduction of the Children's Activity Tax Credit Act, 2010. This proposed act contains amendments to the Taxation Act, 2007, to implement a new permanent tax credit for Ontario families.

We know that children benefit immensely from a diversity of experiences and opportunities. Our government wants to make it easier for parents to give their kids these opportunities by saving families money and helping with their budgets. The children's activity tax credit would help parents with the cost of enrolling their children in activities that encourage them to be healthy and active.

Under our proposed tax credit, parents and guardians would be able to claim up to \$500 in eligible expenses for a credit of \$50 per child under 16 years of age or \$100 for a child with a disability under age 18.

1330

The tax credit builds on the federal children's fitness tax credit but is different in two significant ways. First, our children's activity tax credit would be refundable, meaning that low-income parents who pay little or no income tax would also be able to benefit, unlike the federal tax benefit. All Ontario parents could claim the tax credit on their annual income tax returns, beginning with the 2010 tax year. Any eligible expenses incurred on or after January 1, 2010, would qualify.

Secondly, the Ontario tax credit would cover a wide range of activities, not just sports. These activities include music, dance and art classes, as well as activities with a substantial focus on wilderness and the natural environment. Other activities include language instruction, enrichment or tutoring in academic subjects, and activities with a focus on helping children develop and use intellectual or interpersonal skills.

The criteria for fitness activities would be the same as for the federal children's fitness tax credit. The activities would require a significant amount of physical activity that contributes to cardio-respiratory endurance and to one or more of the following: muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility and balance.

To be eligible for the credit, both fitness and non-fitness activities would have to be supervised and suitable for children. Furthermore, unlike the federal credit, the maximum amounts that may be claimed for the credit would be indexed to rise annually with the cost of living.

This new permanent tax credit would put \$75 million each year back into the pockets of Ontario parents and would benefit more than 1.8 million children in about 1.1 million Ontario families.

This measure directly supports our Open Ontario plan by helping children stay healthy, active and productive so they can reach their full potential. This tax credit is the

right thing to do for our kids, our economy and Ontario. I ask the honourable members to support this legislation so we can move forward to help Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a chance to respond to this new bill that was just introduced by the Minister of Finance, the Children's Activity Tax Credit Act, 2010. My response is that the government takes with one hand and then they give a little back with the other hand, but they've been doing a lot more taking than giving over the last number of years.

They're talking about a \$50 tax credit. Well, let's look at some of the costs that have increased for families in the province of Ontario—of course the big one, most recently, being the HST. They're going to be paying that 8% additional tax on the memberships, on hockey fees, on figure skating fees, soccer fees, on the gas used to drive to the soccer field or the hockey arena—and having had three kids who played hockey, I can tell you that we did an awful lot of driving around. I would suggest that that's going to be far more than the \$50 amount that the government is talking about now giving back.

You look at all the various ways this government has made things more expensive for Ontario families: the HST—I've mentioned that one—that's on your hydro bills and gas bill; most recently, the same day that came in, the eco fees; the big one a couple of years back, the health tax, which was a huge, huge tax increase for families; and recently, as of September 1, of course, the government made changes to auto insurance, so now you pay the same or more and get less coverage. These are all additional costs for Ontario families, and now we find for kids in sporting activities, they're going to be getting \$50 back.

This seems to be a favourite technique of the government. They recently had the northern Ontario energy credit, and they also had cheques going out in the mail with the HST rebate. With that one maybe it's part of their political strategy, because with the HST cheques there was also a nice letter from the Premier outlining all the supposed benefits of the policy. I recall that it listed off a whole bunch of things with the cheque mailed out to people. I would wonder, when this one is refundable and they're going to be getting a cheque, is there going to be another political letter going along with it, a message, with the upcoming election happening next year? I would be interested to know that.

When they passed the HST just last year, coming into effect July 1, why didn't they just exempt children's sporting activities? I know we had gyms coming around to the finance committee, asking if they could be exempt. They didn't exempt them, but then they exempted the under-\$4 purchases at Tim Horton's, probably because there was more political push-back on that one. They're exempting doughnuts and coffee but taxing sporting memberships under the HST.

Here we have this bill coming through. It's a similar pattern to others. There will probably be a cheque in the mail with a political message, as I mentioned to you.

That's what happened with the HST cheques, and in that message, they were talking about how they were going to create all kinds of jobs. Well, since the HST has come into effect, we have actually lost jobs in Ontario—private sector jobs. That message hasn't exactly been correct to this point.

It was just introduced now. We'll have a chance to look at it. I don't think there will be that much. It's a fairly specific bill. I think it's more about politics than anything else. Of course, families will look forward to getting any money they can back from this government because they have been paying so much more in so many different ways under the McGuinty government—as I say, there's a long list of different things they've had to pay more for—and now they will be getting a tiny bit back with a nice political message, I'm sure, saying all the wonderful things that the McGuinty government is doing for them.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's quite amazing to me. I'm surprised there isn't a brass band out front, that there aren't banners flying, that balloons have not been released that at last the millennium has been properly recognized. This is a pittance. This is an action by a finance minister who has taken money here, there and everywhere from the people of this province and, frankly, has decided to give them back a small, shiny rhinestone, something that gleams, something that you can go out and say, "We're doing something for kids," but in fact doesn't deliver, doesn't act on the big issues that parents and children are wrestling with every day.

My colleague Mr. Howard Hampton, just quickly looking at what he pays out now in expenses for his children to engage in hockey—the extra cost of the HST will more than eat up any of this refund. Parents who take their kids to soccer are going to look at HST increases in their costs. That will eat this up. A friend of mine teaches music in downtown Toronto in a school. In the school that she's teaching in, when an instrument breaks, that instrument gets moved out of the band because they can't get money to keep the instruments in shape. You're seeing, in fact, a decay in the arts in our schools, a decay that needs to be corrected, arrested, with actual investment. Instead, people who are in a position to put out \$500 can, miracle of miracles, get back \$50 next year.

I'm glad it's an income tax credit, because that means that people who aren't paying income tax, who don't have that much money, will actually get cash back in hand. But where are they going to get that \$500 to put down in the first place to wait until next year to get that refund? I don't see it.

This summer, I had the opportunity to go door to door and talk to my constituents. I came across a number of families who were dealing with the cost of daycare. I know that this government will say that it has introduced full-day early learning, but I want to say to you that there are many parents who aren't going to schools where that's being introduced in the next year or two or three, who are paying \$1,000 and more per child, who find that

the expense of child care is crippling their family budget. And yet, the announcement today is of this shiny little bauble, this up-to-\$50, don't-spend-it-all-in-one-toy-store event.

1340

When we talk to parents who need affordable daycare now, when we talk to parents who are going to get hit hard when they send their kids to hockey and pay the cost of the HST on that, when we talk to people who work with schools and look at the condition of the buildings—this morning I had an opportunity to talk to a friend of mine who is interested in renewable energy, solar panels on schools, and they're doing a survey of roofs. Roof after roof was leaking, had structural problems and wasn't fit, in the condition it was in, to actually have solar panels put on top of it. Where is the money that is supposed to make sure those schools are in excellent shape because that's where our children are?

This is a shell game: Under one large shell is an amount of money that is needed to actually deal with the needs of our children; under one very small shell is up to \$50 to go back to parents who can afford to spend up to \$500. Who is going to vote against giving parents and their children a small rebate? But let's not kid ourselves, and let's not kid anyone else. In terms of what this province needs and in terms of what the children and parents of this province need, this is totally inadequate.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition to the provincial Parliament.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ... recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring these powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and

Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I affix my signature, as I agree with this petition.

DEVELOPMENT IN VILLAGES OF HEART LAKE

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm pleased to present a petition with over 6,000 names on it.

"Petition to the Legislature of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, voice our disapproval of the Ontario Municipal Board's decision of April 15, 2010, to build a development which includes six high-density, high-rise apartment buildings in the Villages of Heart Lake. This is a small tract in the centre of an area of single-family dwellings, and this proposed development simply does not belong in this area. Our officials unanimously rejected this proposal, yet the OMB, which is not an elected body and supplies no infrastructure support to the city, has ignored the wishes of both council and the residents by approving this development. We are upset and would like this stopped now."

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have a petition from 188 members of Kingfisher Lake First Nation, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario proposes to pass Bill 191, the Far North Act, it violates the treaties and disrespects our jurisdiction. It is not a true partnership. It imposes a massive, interconnected protected area over Nishnawbe-Aski Nation ... homelands without any compensation. If Bill 191 passes, we will not recognize it;

"Whereas we, the people of Kingfisher Lake First Nation within Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, have not yet been consulted and accommodated;

"Whereas we, the people of Kingfisher Lake within Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, have not given free prior and informed consent to Bill 191, all development and protection decisions within Kingfisher Lake within NAN territory require the free, prior and informed consent of the people;

"Whereas we, the people of Kingfisher Lake within Nishnawbe-Aski Nation will make the final land use decisions, Ontario has an obligation to honour and respect Treaty number 9 and Treaty number 5 and First Nations' inherent jurisdiction. We will continue to work on local, community-driven land planning initiatives based on our jurisdiction; and

"Whereas we call on all interested parties, including environmental organizations and industry, to withdraw their support for Bill 191;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To oppose third reading of Bill 191, the Far North Act, and call on Ontario to withdraw it;

"To engage in honourable consultation with the First Nations whose homelands and treaty and aboriginal rights are impacted by Bill 191; and

"To obtain the free, prior and informed consent of the First Nations whose homelands and treaty and aboriginal rights are impacted by Bill 191."

As I indicated, this has been signed by 188 members of Kingfisher Lake First Nation. I have affixed my signature, as well.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

"Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

"Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 70;

"Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment in 2007 to provide a 2% base funding increase to agencies providing developmental services every year up to 2010-11;

"Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

"Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to ... providers in the developmental services sector."

I have affixed my signature.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition that I'd like to present to the Legislature of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ... recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature" should "call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

This has been signed by a number of my constituents. I want to thank Paulette Young for bringing this issue to my attention.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have a petition from 119 members of North Spirit Lake First Nation. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we oppose Bill 191, the Far North Act, and call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to withdraw it;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Bill 191 violates the treaties and disrespects our jurisdiction. It imposes a massive interconnected, protected area over our homelands without any compensation. It splits our northern First Nations from our southern First Nations.

1350

"Ontario has an obligation to honour and respect our treaties and our inherent jurisdiction. All development and protection decisions within NAN territory require the free, prior and informed consent of NAN First Nations.

"We call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately withdraw Bill 191 and, instead, initiate a respectable government-to-government dialogue with NAN First Nations."

As I said, this is signed by 119 members of the North Spirit Lake First Nation, and I have affixed my signature as well.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition signed by employees of Waterloo Region District School Board, which reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other hospitals in the Waterloo region are experiencing substantial increased demands due to population growth; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's freeze on new long-term-care facilities has resulted in additional long-term-care patients in our hospitals; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's cuts to hospital funding have resulted in a dangerous environment for patients and staff in Cambridge and across Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government meet its obligations to introduce a population-needs-based funding formula for hospitals, as has been done in other Canadian provinces."

Pursuant to the rules, I affix my name thereto.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have a number of petitions from Wunnumin Lake First Nation, and I would like to read them now. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario proposes to pass Bill 191, the Far North Act, [and] it violates the treaties and disrespects our jurisdiction. It is not a true partnership. It imposes a massive, interconnected, designated protected area over Nishnawbe-Aski Nation homelands without any compensation. If Bill 191 passes, we will not recognize it.

"Whereas we, the people of Wunnumin Lake First Nation within the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, have not been consulted and accommodated;

"Whereas we, the people of Wunnumin Lake First Nation within the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, have not given our free, prior and informed consent to Bill 191, [and] all development and protection decisions within Wunnumin Lake First Nation of Nishnawbe-Aski Nation require the free, prior and informed consent of the people;

"Whereas we, the people of Wunnumin Lake First Nation within the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, will make the final land use decisions. Ontario has an obligation to honour and respect Treaty number 9 and Treaty number 5 and First Nations' inherent jurisdiction. We will continue to work on our local, community-driven land use planning initiatives based on our jurisdiction;

"Whereas we call on all interested parties, including environmental organizations and industry, to withdraw their support for Bill 191;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To oppose the third reading of Bill 191, the Far North Act, and call on Ontario to withdraw it;

"To engage in honourable consultation with the First Nations whose homelands and treaty and aboriginal rights are impacted by Bill 191; and

"To obtain the free, prior and informed consent of the First Nations whose homelands and treaty and aboriginal rights are impacted by Bill 191."

As I indicated, this petition has been signed by 293 members of Wunnumin Lake First Nation. I have attached my signature as well.

TAXATION

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition regarding the HST.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again on Canada Day 2010 with his new combined 13% GST, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% combined GST will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as:"—and there's a number of examples, including haircuts, dry cleaning, taxi fares, train fares;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government recognize Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Nickel Belt, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients under" certain "conditions...; and

"Whereas" since "October 2009, insured PET scans" are "performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care" services "in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with Thomas.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WATER OPPORTUNITIES AND WATER CONSERVATION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DES TECHNOLOGIES DE L'EAU ET LA CONSERVATION DE L'EAU

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Wilkinson, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 72, An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts in respect of water conservation and other matters / Projet de loi 72, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur le développement des

technologies de l'eau et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'eau et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It is my honour to rise today to begin second reading debate on the McGuinty government's proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act.

In this great province, we are blessed with vast quantities of fresh water. The very name "Ontario" has its roots in a number of aboriginal languages that describe "a beautiful lake."

From the Great Lakes, which contain close to one fifth of the planet's fresh surface water, to the thousands of rivers, lakes and streams that are a unique part of our geography, Ontario is fortunate to have water resources that are the envy of the world. At the same time, we need to understand that this resource is not limitless. We need to respect what we have and use it more responsibly.

Water has played a fundamental role throughout Ontario's history in building our prosperity and our quality of life. It enabled early trade and transportation. It was the foundation of our mill towns and essential to our farms, our fisheries and our factories. It adds immeasurably to our quality of life and enhances our enjoyment of our natural environment.

And water will help guide our future. Exporting our technology for clean water is a key part of the McGuinty government's Open Ontario plan, seeking to support and develop Ontario's existing strengths such as our banking system, centred in Toronto and envied around the globe, and one of the strongest post-secondary school systems in the world.

Protecting and conserving our water will be among the most important actions we can take to ensure the continuing success of our province for our economic vitality and environmental health.

Clean, safe water is in critical demand around the world. That demand is just going to continue to rise, spurred on by climate change, population growth and urbanization. In the next 20 years, experts predict a 40% gap between global supply and demand for water, a crisis in the making of extreme proportions. Some reports indicate that in 15 years' time, 1.8 billion people will live in regions of water scarcity.

Along with the growing demand for water comes the demand for technologies and processes that can make the most of this scarce and valuable resource—technologies that can treat water and make it safe, innovative approaches that can conserve water, and technologies that can make the most of the water that is available.

1400

The Conference Board of Canada estimates the market for clean water technology at \$400 billion and growing at a rate of 15% annually. Ontario cannot afford to be left behind. What we are proposing is to make Ontario a

North American leader in the water and waste water technology sector. Let me reiterate what Premier McGuinty has already clearly stated: We are not selling our water; we are capitalizing on our know-how and our leading-edge technology. This proposed legislation, if passed, would make Ontario a key jurisdiction in the water technology sector much in the way the Green Energy and Green Economy Act has moved Ontario to the forefront on renewable energy, with significant economic benefits for Ontarians and their families.

Our proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act would, if passed, lay the groundwork for innovation in what is the fastest-growing segment in the environmental industry. It would help to support the growth and expansion of Ontario water tech businesses and create good jobs for Ontarians in an industry that already employs close to 22,000 people.

Let me outline again for my colleagues the three outcomes we want to achieve. The proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, if passed, would, first, assist in making Ontario a North American leader in the development and sale of technologies for water treatment and water conservation; second, encourage sustainable infrastructure and conservation planning, including using innovative technologies to solve water, waste water and storm water infrastructure challenges; and third, encourage Ontarians to use water more wisely. I'd like to expand on each of these in turn, beginning with the first point: how we envision putting Ontario's know-how in water technology on the map.

One of the first steps would involve establishing a new water partnership called the Water Technology Acceleration Project—WaterTAP for short—a new non-crown corporation that would support research and development as well as the commercialization of new technologies and innovations in Ontario's water sector. This new corporation would bring together government, industry, academic and financial experts to support the creation and growth of globally competitive companies.

The Water Technology Acceleration Project is a key component of our strategy. It would provide a trusted source of information about the Ontario water sector and help build the made-in-Ontario brand through marketing and global outreach, and would, on the request of the Minister of Research and Innovation, provide advice on such matters as product labelling and technology verification. While some Ontario companies are already acknowledged leaders in certain areas of clean water technology such as ultraviolet disinfection, compact sewage treatment and plant design, the industry is composed of some 300 small firms. This project would bring all these companies, academics and government together, helping to create an economy of scale that benefits our environment and our economy. By connecting people from different companies and from different research and technology centres, we can identify areas for co-operation and collaboration.

If directed by the Minister of Research and Innovation, the corporation could coordinate and host an international conference on water, showcasing Ontario's

water tech companies and linking potential buyers from around the world with our products and services. It would also help identify demonstration and early adoption opportunities, as well as provide advice to government. This would help spur on great made-in-Ontario products and services and take our innovative and new water technologies from the drawing board to the marketplace.

Along with this new corporation, the act, if passed, would expand the mandate of the Ontario Clean Water Agency, which already has substantial expertise in water and waste water technology, thereby allowing the agency to play a leadership role in supporting innovation, facilitating the demonstration of Ontario-based technologies and supporting the water technology acceleration project outside Ontario.

The second outcome I spoke about earlier would allow for the creation of an integrated approach to municipal water infrastructure planning in order to achieve long-term sustainability. Water efficiency is the most cost-effective way to generate water and waste water capacity. In fact, the cost of conservation programs may be as little as a quarter of the cost of new infrastructure.

Some forward-looking municipalities in Ontario are already planning for long-term sustainability and have developed their own forward-thinking water conservation and efficiency plans. They understand that water conservation planning saves water and costs, both infrastructure costs and energy costs. For example, in 1999 the city of Guelph was faced with having to source new water supplies to meet the growing needs of residents. Instead, they chose to implement a water conservation and efficiency program, including incentives such as toilet rebate programs, rain barrel programs and public education. Investment in water conservation since 2006 has resulted in water savings worth up to \$7.3 million in the avoided cost of a new water supply.

Guelph was also faced with a decision in 2005 to build a new waste water treatment plant to meet its capacity needs, anticipated to cost \$30 million. By investing \$1.5 million to date in optimization of their current system instead, the city expects to avoid the need for a new plant.

The proposed act would help municipalities improve the efficiency of municipal water infrastructure and services by encouraging municipalities to look for innovative cost-effective solutions to solve water, waste water and storm water challenges, including water conservation; optimize systems and improve water conservation; identify opportunities to demonstrate and implement new and emerging Ontario water technologies and services; and move toward measures and targets to demonstrate progress.

Let me now turn to conservation on the part of individuals, the third outcome we wish to achieve. More than half of Ontarians believe that fresh water is our most important natural resource. At the same time, they may not be fully aware of the need to conserve and safeguard our water since we have always had such a good supply virtually at our fingertips. In fact, the average person in

our province uses around 267 litres of water every day. Compare that to the average in countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and France, where people use about 150 litres per day. Moving towards a similar target in Ontario is attainable. One of the key ways to do that is to help people understand how they can do their part to conserve water.

The proposed act, if passed, would help encourage efforts to reduce Ontario's residential water use significantly. Using water efficiently is one of the most cost-effective ways to address water and waste water needs. Our proposed act, if passed, would help encourage efforts that significantly reduce residential water use. It would give the government the authority to require standardized information on water bills to help people understand how much water they use and allow them to track their progress as they reduce their use.

We are also proposing, for example, water efficiency standards for more consumer products, such as shower heads, to help people use less water and save money. As a complementary measure, we would also consider opportunities to bring water labelling to Ontario. That would make it easier for people to find and purchase high-performance water-efficient products, much the way the WaterSense program works in the United States.

The residential sector accounts for 40% of all energy used in Ontario, and heating water is typically the second-largest consumer of energy in buildings. Improved water efficiency will save not only water but also energy well into the future.

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A number of Ontario municipalities have identified water and waste water facilities as significant energy consumers, reportedly accounting for between 25% and 60% of their respective municipal electricity bills, so one of the key goals of our proposed act would be to encourage the use of innovative water technologies and services to reduce the use of water and energy.

Something many people don't realize is that much of the cost of providing clean water and treating waste water is the cost of energy associated with these activities. New technology is often much more efficient, using much less water to run the same systems, potentially providing cost savings to municipalities and ultimately to consumers.

It would enable the government to demonstrate leadership through considering water conservation in procurement and through water conservation planning by all public entities, such as universities, schools and hospitals.

The proposed act, if passed, would also amend the Building Code Act to ensure consideration of water conservation and expand the mandate of the Building Code Energy Advisory Council.

We are talking about moving Ontario forward in a way that will help us build a sustainable future, support leading clean tech innovations, and generate new good jobs well into the future.

When it comes to Ontario's water tech sector, we already have a number of successful and innovative

companies winning recognition for their products and services. We intend to take that to the next level.

Ontario innovations are already at work around the world, in Orange county, California, in northern Holland, and in places like Saudi Arabia. We want to build on any existing synergies among small, medium and large water tech businesses, academia, researchers and financial experts, to connect all the dots so our water tech companies can connect with the world. Under our government's visionary Open Ontario initiative, we are laying the foundation for the next generation of Ontario businesses and the next generation of clean tech jobs.

We have already had feedback and support from a number of different stakeholders. Derek Stack, the executive director of Great Lakes United, stated: "This legislation shows the Ontario government recognizes water conservation cuts pumping and heating expenses, quells greenhouse gases, and eliminates the costly expansion of delivery and treatment systems, saving the environment and Ontario taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars every year."

From Johann Manente, a manager at the regional municipality of Peel, we heard: "The McGuinty government has recognized a critical connection between energy efficiency and water efficiency. Taking action on eliminating water-wasting fixtures and appliances and specifically addressing water conservation in the building code will be a huge step. The opportunity to consider water efficiency labelling would also be a first in Canada."

David Henderson, managing director, XPV Capital Corp., stated: "With the right bold vision, commitment and action, Ontario has the opportunity to become a global leader in the clean water technology market, bringing new prosperity to the people of Ontario, including high-value jobs, economic growth and ensuring future Ontarians have access to the most precious resource on the planet."

Bill 72 was posted on the Environmental Registry for a 60-day period for public comment, and the resulting comments were extremely supportive. If the proposed act is passed, we would continue to consult widely with the public, municipalities and stakeholders in the development of regulations under the act.

Our government has made water a fundamental priority. The strong measures we have taken to protect and conserve our water have made us a North American leader. From the Clean Water Act, which has made our drinking water some of the best-protected and highest-quality in North America, to the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, focusing on watershed and ecosystem sustainability, to Ontario's Water Resources Act, which bans water diversions from the Great Lakes basin, we have worked hard to ensure that this valuable resource will continue to sustain and support the high quality of life we enjoy.

Today we advance our actions even further with the proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act.

The act, if passed, would be a landmark piece of legislation. It would open up the world for Ontario water

tech companies so they could expand and prosper. It would open Ontario to new ideas, growth and innovation. It would open up new opportunities for good jobs for our people. It would strengthen our communities by helping us conserve water and energy. As important as all these things are to our health and success, just as importantly it would help Ontarians provide solutions to some of the world's most critical environmental and human health issues.

This is the right step to take and this is the right time to take that step. I strongly urge all of the members of this House to support the proposed act.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to offer a couple of comments in the time that's available. I guess what I was looking for was some response on the part of the government to talk about those sinkholes that Torontonians and the rest of us face during the wintertime, because that's the evidence that I think most people would be looking for in terms of any kind of undertaking by the government to improve the fundamentals of water and sewage.

When you have major streets like Finch and Sheppard and places like that out of commission for weeks and weeks at a time in a city that suffers from, I believe, a world reputation for gridlock, it would seem to me that would be one of the key features you would be looking for: a method of making sure that that is done in a timely and efficient manner.

It's interesting because much of what the parliamentary assistant included in her remarks had to do with efficiencies, and that would seem to me to be a number one priority: Clean up the sewage treatment facilities or transfer of sewage treatment throughout the city so we don't have sinkholes. The other is of course the leakage that takes place of clean water. Again, the parliamentary assistant talked about the importance—and we'd all agree—of access to clean water, but when that access is hampered by as much as perhaps a third of all the clean water that's transferred through pipes actually leaking out, I would think that would be a number one priority. I was disappointed not to hear that today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I must confess that when I first heard about this bill, it brought to mind all of the water-related problems and challenges that people face in Ontario, and I would have thought that the government in fact would be prepared in this bill to do something about that.

Let me give you an example. There are still a great number of communities in Ontario where from time to time—all too frequently—people have to boil their water. For many of these communities they would like to improve the water quality, but the issue is the very high cost of doing that. I would have liked to have seen something in this bill which would have said to those municipalities that the province is prepared to act to

ensure that all of those communities and all of those people will have access to safe, clean drinking water.

One of the other issues is that some communities in the past few years have been forced to update their water treatment systems and water supply systems, but now they find, because the bill comes directly to them, that the residents can't afford to pay the water bill. It seems to me that also is a serious problem.

Thirdly, we have untold numbers of First Nations citizens who cannot rely upon drinking water in their community, and this government is noticeably absent in meeting that challenge, in fact is very quick simply to point the finger at the federal government.

Finally, there's another challenge. Where I live, American states are looking very seriously at piping water out of our lakes and rivers and piping it to the US Midwest. I would have thought we would have heard something about that.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: This is the kind of bill that should be supported unanimously and passed through the House as quickly as possible. I listen to the comments of my colleagues, and I am amazed they don't get it. This is not about exporting Ontario's water resources; it is about exporting our water expertise.

I had the good fortune earlier this year to spend a little bit of time in India, and I visited with one of the states—some of their government ministers. The first thing that they all said they wanted to buy from Ontario is—they said, "You are acknowledged leaders in the management of clean water, and we need to have clean water." That particular state, the state of Gujarat, population of 55 million, is out in the middle of the desert.

They are not atypical all across the world. The whole world needs to know how to produce and manage fresh water. And we know, here in Ontario, how to manage the technology of keeping and using fresh water. That's what this bill is about. This bill is about managing fresh water. This bill is about exporting our expertise, not our resources, in managing fresh water.

What Ontario knows is what the rest of world is clamouring to have. We cannot fail when it comes to our expertise in fresh water and when it comes to creating the jobs of the future, the jobs that the kids are studying for in university and the future that they want for themselves with high value-added jobs. That comes in helping the rest of the world manage fresh water.

We have got to get this bill passed. This industry already employs 22,000 people, and it has nothing but potential in the future. I urge the passage of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm pleased to comment on the Water Opportunities Act, 2010. Like everything else, individuals who phone my office have opened up their hydro accounts, and all of a sudden, there is an enormous increase in hydro fees. They are paying, of course, the

health tax; there is a possibility of an eco tax. And the question they would ask me in this particular bill, the Water Opportunities Act, is exactly what this is going to cost them.

The difficulty with this government is they don't announce the tax. Everyone is in favour of clean water, there's no doubt about that, but at what cost? There's no costing given for this. How are they going to pay for this act?

In many small areas, for instance with septic tanks and wells—they required enormous costs. We have a campsite in our Cambridge area, and they almost put the campsite out of business. This government, through its regulation, almost put the campsite out of business simply because of the hidden costs that weren't revealed at the time they passed the legislation. That has been the history of the McGuinty government. They put forward a bill with a nice name that everybody can agree to, but when you ask at what cost, what is the hidden price tag that you are not telling us about—therein lies the difficulty with this bill, and we will be scrutinizing it very carefully.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Oak Ridges–Markham has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I would like to acknowledge the comments made by my colleagues from York–Simcoe, Kenora–Rainy River, Mississauga–Streetsville and Cambridge. I guess I am a little surprised about some of the comments that were made. I think this bill is an absolute model of clarity and a model of balance in terms of our proposals.

But in response to some of the comments made, I would like to remind the member for Kenora–Rainy River that in fact our government banned bulk water transfers in 2007 under the Water Resources Act. This is another step in the right direction. We are not selling our water; we are selling the wonderful expertise of many Ontario companies not only to the rest of the world, but we're bringing very much to the attention of municipalities and other water and waste water producers the expertise that exists in our province already.

Certainly, I was very pleased to hear from Bill Fisch, York regional chairman. He had some comments on this bill, and I'm going to quote him as the chairman of one of those very forward-looking municipalities:

"Our communities are committed to protecting the environment and our water resources. This is demonstrated through the success of York region's Water for Tomorrow program. Over the last 13 years, our initiatives have produced tremendous results; conservation and efficiency is providing enough water for an additional 90,000 people from our existing water supplies."

It's this kind of forward thinking that we believe can be shared—these new innovations across the province. We believe that our citizens and our municipalities are up to the challenge.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I welcome the opportunity to be part of this debate on the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, Bill 72. For whatever reason, it was introduced about four months ago. It was introduced on May 18, very close to the 10th anniversary of Walkerton. At the time—and I assume this was the intention—the government was attempting to garner some green headlines. I know they sent out some green news releases. I sincerely hope there will be hearings with respect to this legislation. As with the Clean Water Act, perhaps the first place we can go when we travel—let's go back to Walkerton. That was what was done with the Clean Water Act hearings.

The legislation was introduced on May 18 last spring and nothing happened. There was no debate; there was no opportunity for debate. Here we are four months later. If this government is going to operate at such a glacial snail's pace, I think with some trepidation, what if Walkerton had happened on the watch of this government and they took four months to get their act together?

Another piece of legislation was introduced last spring, environmental legislation—the new Waste Diversion Act. It was promised on April 22. It was promised on or about Earth Day again. We were told by the minister of the day that this legislation would come forward in another four weeks or so. We haven't seen hide or hair of that legislation as well. Again, there were some green headlines at the time. It was supposed to arrive in May. Again, nothing.

We really haven't heard much from this government other than the July 1 advent of eco fees. I found out July 2. I was completely blindsided by that one, as was, it seems, just about everybody in the province. Perhaps government MPPs didn't know the eco fees were coming in on July 1 either. They certainly didn't tell anybody.

Mrs. Julia Munro: The minister didn't.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I just heard that perhaps the minister did not know that eco fees were coming in on July 1 of this past summer, but that's a whole other story, and we will have an opportunity this fall to discuss eco fees.

We have the McGuinty water bill, Bill 72. Four months of waiting, and it does raise some questions. I just heard this question a few minutes ago: How much will it cost? It's not the first time we've heard that this afternoon. In fact, we just heard that from the third party, who have a concern. I know that some of the environmental groups, let alone ratepayers and property taxpayers, are very concerned about the cost and whether this would reflect clearly on the intent of this legislation.

Again, over the summer residents in my area and across the province were suffering sticker shock as they started to look at their electricity bills. Are we going to expect the same kind of sticker shock with this water bill?

1430

How will the billions of dollars be raised to repair the infrastructure that this government has talked about? I'm not sure what they've done in the past seven years, but here we are seven years into this government's mandate and they're talking about fixing up infrastructure.

Another question: Why is this government creating yet another crown agency? We have OCWA now, the Ontario Clean Water Agency. We have the OPA, obviously—those who follow the electricity pricing. We have the LHINs. Those bodies are unelected and out of control. Again, why is this legislation bringing in yet another unelected, potentially out-of-control agency?

Where are the targets? This has been raised over the summer. Where are the targets to cut water leakage, as we've just heard? Where are the targets to ensure compliance?

One other point: I do recall last spring when Mr. McGuinty was in the media talking about the Water Opportunities Act. He talked about disallowing the bulk export of water. However, we've just heard from the parliamentary assistant; they're already taking credit for disallowing the bulk export of water. That's federal jurisdiction, as far as I understand. If they're going to take credit for disallowing the bulk export of water from Ontario, certainly the previous government could also take credit for disallowing the bulk export of water, because we had a situation that came up—export by boat out of Lake Superior, as I recall. I first heard about that on the Monday of the week, on the radio, and by Thursday or Friday our Minister of the Environment of the day made it very clear, at that time, that Ontario would not allow that ship to leave with water.

Provincial jurisdiction: This obviously has a big impact on municipal governments. When you talk about water exports or some of the serious infrastructure problems that we see in native communities, it involves three levels of government. Water legislation right across the country, really, is a bit of a patchwork of federal and provincial guidelines. I sincerely hope that this legislation is not another patch on that patchwork. I sincerely hope that somehow this legislation can be rejigged, can be amended, through hearings and further public input, to perhaps integrate water systems, perhaps to better enable us to integrate with municipal and federal guidelines. Because right now—I'm concerned that this particular bill is going to add to the problem—we have an issue with fragmentation, we have an issue with turf wars and an issue with passing the buck, especially when the question comes up of, where are the billions of dollars going to come from to essentially fulfill the objectives of some of this legislation?

Primary power lies with the provinces—in this case, with the province of Ontario. The federal government, as we know, focuses more on the territories, native communities and with certain transboundary issues like the export of water.

It goes without saying, and it has been said over the last few minutes, that there's no doubt that clean water is essential. It's essential to the health and success of this particular province, and it's the one element that's so basic yet so essential to individuals, to businesses and to industry that it does require continued protection. It requires promotion and information to better enable people to use water wisely. That can be done through the

media. That can be done through literature, inserts in the ever-increasing projected water bills. It doesn't necessarily require more laws to get the word out about the importance of, for example, conservation.

There's also little doubt that the international community and certain countries, as their per capita wealth increases, as they put more value on clean water and have more physical resources to dedicate towards clean water, there is that potential, obviously, to recognize the expertise that can be developed in Ontario. I know the parliamentary assistant just mentioned we can be a North American leader with respect to the development of water cleanup innovation. Now, that says something: a North American leader.

We're not going to catch up to countries like China, Australia or Korea. They've hit the ground running. They're way ahead of us. We're probably going to be importing the technology from large, multinational companies—probably Samsung. Who knows?

It was for these kinds of reasons that our former government—actually for decades, really—committed over the years to the continual enactment of water legislation, water regulation. We committed, obviously, to the recommendations of the O'Connor report. We made a commitment to the Centre of Excellence in Walkerton, for example. We put forward, amongst other legislation, the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act; that was about eight years ago. We put forward the Safe Drinking Water Act.

What concerns me is the very fact that it took seven years for this government to finally come to the table with some sort of an approach to water conservation and related water infrastructure. It brings into question this government's commitment. There were probably seven opportunities—seven anniversaries of Walkerton—when this government could have announced this legislation to garner some green media and to shine on the 6 o'clock news. They didn't take it until this spring, and then, as I said, they didn't do anything with it. That was last May. We've been waiting since last May.

Also, this government couldn't seem to live up to its commitment to bring in, as I mentioned, the new Waste Diversion Act, which it promised to deliver something like five weeks before the end of the last session, or maybe earlier. It was April 22; it was around Earth Day. We've seen the eco fee debacle since then, and it's not surprising that the government mishandled that file. The concern is perhaps that they've gone back to the drawing board; perhaps the stakeholders have told them to take the Waste Diversion Act back and start that one over again.

So there are questions: What's happened over the past seven years? What happened to Bill 175? That was the one that I just mentioned, the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act. That came out, was passed and received royal assent back in 2002. This government did nothing with it—no regulation.

That was about eight years ago. We had the report. We had the plans. We introduced and entrenched the notion

of full-cost recovery for waste water and water services. It passed third and final reading. It received royal assent December 13, 2002. Again, the question, what has happened in the past seven years? More than seven years, really, I guess it would be going on eight years—would it be?—coming up this December. Obviously, not very much from this particular government.

As I recall, we did the heavy lifting on that one, and the government dropped the ball. They never really picked up the ball in the first place. If regulations were already in place—I put this out—perhaps municipalities now would have had a seven- or eight-year head start on improving water and sewer infrastructure, waste water, stormwater infrastructure, plugging the leaks and perhaps doing a better job at spurring on limited usage, less usage and conservation of water.

1440

It was pointed out by Joe Accardi, executive director of the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association, that the guts of Bill 175 were never enshrined in regulation—certainly not in the last seven years—leaving it in limbo. Mr. Accardi continues to advocate, and I quote, for “legislation and regulation to be in place at the provincial level to ensure dedicated reserve funding through a full-cost recovery model.” There is one group of stakeholders. They've been waiting on this government for seven years now to do something on that front.

Finally, today in the Ontario Legislature we do have a chance to address the government's Water Opportunities Act. For whatever reason, the presentation by the government was relatively brief. They had an hour to make their case; they didn't use that hour. They used maybe—I'm not sure—25% of their time. But we have the Water Opportunities Act before us.

It's an act, again, depending on who you listen to, that's aimed at everything from encouraging water conservation and updating municipal infrastructure to making Ontario a North American leader in clean water technology—not a world leader; a North American leader. We know, with the solar file; we know, with the wind power file; we know, with other issues of green technology that the world leaders are countries like Korea. We know of the multi-billion dollar deal that this government signed with the Samsung corporation, the third-largest corporation in the world as far as solar and wind technology go. The goal here that they've set their sights on is being the North American leader, because countries like Korea, China and Australia have outstripped us on this front.

For example, some of our own companies, like Zenon and Trojan, have been targeted by large multinationals. GE—General Electric—bought Zenon. They shut down their Burlington operation and moved the manufacturing to Hungary. If you wish to buy those certain kinds of threadlike filters from the Zenon corporation, an Ontario company, you're going to have them shipped in from Hungary.

The Water Opportunities Act, in my view, represents the second kick at the water can for the McGuinty

government in recent months, following MPP David Caplan's—this is a long title—act, his legislation. It's called the Sustainable Water and Waste Water Systems Improvement and Maintenance Act. I hope that's the long title. My fear is that was maybe the short title.

That bill too was designed to support municipal water infrastructure upgrades. What was a little scary was that Mr. Caplan pegged the cost to consumers at about \$600 a year. Everybody here, and anybody who's listening to this presentation, hang on to your wallet because here comes another bill by way of Mr. McGuinty.

The question does remain as to what would be the cost of what I see before us today, essentially an overarching tidal wave of a McGuinty water bill. There's no price tag on this legislation. There's no indication of where the money is going to come from.

Last spring I had an opportunity in the Legislature to question the Premier directly. I asked the question three times on the potential or plans for a new water tax. Also, I asked about rumours of a new carbon tax. As we in the House would understand, Mr. McGuinty refused to answer those questions. Perhaps some of those answers will come up as we go forward with this and with hearings.

This is worrisome. There is anxiety as far as electricity bills across the province of Ontario. The worrisome part for people in Ontario with this particular legislation is that they won't be able to afford the McGuinty water bill with its price hike or tax hike. Perhaps they can call it a fee or a stipend or give it some other name to try and smooth the way.

We know that the Green Energy Act, the HST and the approved rate hikes are pushing electricity up 20% over the coming months, and many are asking themselves how they can afford these kinds of electricity hikes. They should well be wary of this particular piece of legislation when we're not told how much it's going to cost.

I see in this bill a bit of a warning. It's a warning for residential users, property taxpayers or water ratepayers. It's a warning for industrial users. It's a warning for farmers, those involved in irrigation-based agriculture. You do require a permit to take water. How many new forms and how many reports are farmers, for example, now going to have to fill out as this legislation passes?

We also know that during these dire economic times this government has spent its way to the bottom of the barrel. Many of our residents are really struggling to maintain their livelihoods. I do question the timing of what could be very significant water rate increases on top of the other McGuinty tax increases.

Again, if we go back eight years and just recall the largest increase in income taxes in the history of Ontario, and seven years after that we saw the largest sales tax increase in the history of Ontario.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Was that mentioned in their platform?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Good point.

Given the history of provincial governments of various stripes ensuring clean water and promoting clean

water technology, I do question the need for costly new legislation. I question whether existing water regulations and existing management initiatives couldn't be used to maintain these kinds of clean water goals.

I question whether the demonstration of technology requires legislation. We have research and innovation institutions. I think of the MaRS organization, which would be 300 yards behind the Speaker, essentially, over on College Street. A number of these organizations have been in place for years, and I question why they wouldn't be asked to continue to be involved in this kind of work.

But most of all, I question the cost of McGuinty's water bill. So far, we've seen nothing on the price that we'll pay. I can assure you, we will all be paying a price. So I repeat my warning: Hang on to your wallet.

In addressing this proposed legislation, Bill 72, I do recognize that certainly in my part of the province we are blessed with water. We oftentimes take water for granted. It's a cliché, but it's very simple now. Very simply, you just turn on the tap, and by the same token you just flush the toilet.

Through my previous employment—this was a number of years ago and this is something that has always stayed with me—I and another fellow drove a truck pretty well with the length of California. We started in San Diego, up to Los Angeles and San Francisco. We were selling films, of all things, in California. It's like taking coals to Newcastle. This was back in the late 1970s—1977, 1978. We were on the road for a number of weeks. It seemed that three times a day we were in a restaurant. In every single restaurant we walked into, there was a sign on the table telling you that you could not get a glass of water in that restaurant, because California was going through a very serious drought. Water was not available with your meal. I think in some of the restaurants, if you made an issue, if you approached management, you could get a glass of water. In the state of California everything else was in abundance: food, alcohol, gasoline—lots of beautiful cars everywhere we went. But you couldn't get a glass of water with your meal in the state of California in the late 1970s. We found that quite surprising.

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I had grown up on Lake Erie. We were working out of Toronto, based, obviously, on Lake Ontario. There was lots of water to drink. At that time people in Toronto couldn't swim in Lake Ontario—but they could drink it. I really had trouble squaring that one in my mind. This was before the little plastic water bottles. As I recall, this summer, off the beaches of Toronto—I think three of the beaches were closed, but we are drinking Toronto water today.

Just to go back to the state of California, they have a very significant water infrastructure. They have a tremendous agricultural empire based on water. Every year, the state of California moves 14 trillion gallons of water, mainly south, capturing it behind 1,200 dams on just about every river and stream in the state. That's 14 trillion gallons—the French translation would be 53 trillion litres—moving water under mountains, moving

water over mountains; a tremendous network of ditches, irrigation canals and pipes to provide the fuel, essentially, for this agricultural empire. Some 55% of North America's fruit, nuts and vegetables come from California. It's the sixth-largest agricultural exporter in the world, and it's based on water and irrigation-based agriculture: intensive farming in a region that by and large gets something like only 20 inches of rain a year. There's a cliché with respect to this: In California water runs uphill to money.

California gets droughts; so does Ontario. In the mid-1950s—I do recall the drought of the 1950s on our farm. We are clay loam. I was much smaller than I am now, and I recall that I could put my foot in the cracks in the fields on our farms. And then we had 40 years of rainfall; 40 years of almost too much water in Ontario, until the late 1990s, when we had several very tough years in the province of Ontario, very tough years for agriculture when the quantity was not there. I talk about quantity. The quality of water is also directly related to the quantity. So I just raise an example of a crisis, local and close to home.

There are a number of ways of coping with water crises—hopefully not here; presently water crises are occurring in many parts of our world. Number one, you can try to provide more water; either make it from sea water if you're on the coast or draw it from elsewhere through the engineering or the water diversions that we see in California. The second approach to a crisis: Use less of it. Use less of it through technological innovation, something this bill is addressing; pricing policy, something this bill can be addressing; good management; and conservation. There's a third way: You can use the same amount per person around the world, but that would require either stability or fewer people—and I mention that given the tremendous increase in the world's population, certainly in my lifetime.

There are other ways. You can steal water; you can steal it from someone else. The politics of violence kicks in in parts of the world. I doubt that we would see the kind of water wars that we hear mentioned on occasion.

A few years ago there was the tugboat solution—this one didn't go very far—this idea of towing icebergs to where the water is needed. Greenland, Alaska, Antarctica all have fresh water frozen in ice. Icebergs are breaking off and drifting out to sea. The idea was, why don't you capture them and tow them to where they belong? But it has been proven not to be economically feasible.

There were other ideas kicked around, such as—a little disconcerting—diverting water flowing into James Bay and turning it around and shipping it south to the Great Lakes. The notion of exporting Canadian water was mentioned by the parliamentary assistant—exporting water to Asia or to the United States. This has virtually no support at all amongst the general public, as far as I understand. I know Mr. McGuinty talked about this when he was doing media on this particular water legislation, but I don't think that by any stretch this legislation is addressing the export of water.

As far as lack of public support, a poll was done in 2004; 80% of Canadians do not want their water sold in bulk. And the federal government, through its constitutional authority over navigable waters—whether it's in lakes, rivers or streams—controls the export of bulk water. This is on their file. Bottled water is another issue; it's a tariff good. Bottled water, as I understand, is covered under NAFTA, but apparently the export of bulk water is not covered or dealt with by NAFTA. Again, if this export of water is so unpopular, it leads to the obvious question: Shouldn't the federal government be legislating an outright ban on the export of bulk water if they haven't done so?

Technology: Many jurisdictions do this now, getting fresh water from the sea, essentially making new fresh water through desalinating sea water. It's becoming increasingly cost-effective. That's the beauty of technology and advances in technology. Many people in certain parts of the world see this as an answer. Some 97% of the water on earth is in the oceans, and just over 96% of that sea water is actually fresh water. The problem is the other 3% or 3.5% comprising dissolved solids that make it unusable for human beings, for plants, for irrigation on farms. If you can get rid of those solids, you can drink it and you can irrigate crops with it. Again, this would only apply to Ontario's saltwater coast in the north and I really think at this point it's obviously not necessary in that part of the province, on James Bay or Hudson's Bay, as we're not irrigating potatoes up in Attawapiskat, as far as I know, or not yet, anyway.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: With global warming, you never know.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Not yet anyway. Who knows?

So if you can't get more water, well, use less of it. That's fairly simple. I think that principle has been inculcated in this legislation and rolled over yet again in this legislation. How do you use less of it? I think of basic economics kicking in: Reduce demand. This can be done a number of ways: by conservation. You can also reduce demand by pricing mechanisms—I think we see a direction coming out of this legislation on that one—or by making the existing consumption more efficient through a combination of management and the use of innovative technology. Again, so often the prophets of doom, with their talk of water wars, so often the people who raise these kinds of issues are proven wrong by some new invention that comes along. So technology is one answer to the challenge, but I also feel very clearly that technology on its own is not enough.

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Much of the current water wastefulness in much of the world—and, I think I would say, in Ontario—is political in its origins. Pricing and public policy and economics are critical to the discussion that we will be having over the next several months. I think one of the members opposite made reference to the fact that he wanted to rush this legislation through, and I think this issue is so important for the future that we have to take our time. We have to have debate. We have to have public

hearings. We have to have amendments to this legislation. We have to have third reading and make sure we get this one right.

As far as aging technology and infrastructure, there are emerging opportunities—I will use that word, which is captured in the title of this bill—for technologies that can retrofit, within the existing footprint of aging water and waste water treatment facilities, to increase capacity for these growing municipalities that have old infrastructure and either don't have additional room to expand their existing plants or don't have the capital—the money issue—to site new plants.

Detection of leaks, remediation of poor-quality pipes, broken pipes, leaking pipes: These kinds of technologies will become critical to add years to existing infrastructure, and it's one way to keep the costs down. It's one way to defer the large capital-intensive infrastructure projects, the kind of projects that are winners. They come to the top when governments go down the route of stimulus funding, when they go down the route of borrowing money they don't have to tax and to spend and to shove it out the door—or, I should say, shovel it out the door. So there is technology to remediate and to work, to make do with what we have, instead of aspiring to have a totally brand new infrastructure.

However, as far as technology—and I made mention earlier—we've seen companies like Zenon and Trojan, Canada's technology companies, become targets of acquisition by large multinationals which are doing exactly what this legislation is trying to do: They want to be world leaders. These large corporations want to be global leaders, essentially, with respect to water, and they want to make money on it. I think of very large corporations like Veolia and Suez. They're in the business of treating water, treating waste water, dealing with stormwater.

Zenon, for example: There was one plant—this was just about the time that this Water Opportunities Act was mentioned in the throne speech, and at that time Zenon was moving out of Burlington, to Hungary. Zenon, an environmental incorporation, will cease operations by the end of this year, and you will be buying those filters overseas. It was purchased by GE. It's called GE Water and Process Technologies. It was acquired in 2006 by GE Canada. There goes the Burlington plant. They were manufacturing what was referred to as the ZeeWeed line. It's a spaghetti-like membrane that filters bacteria and other contaminants out of water and out of waste water. Again, this is an article in the March 10 *Hamilton Spectator*: “ZeeWeed operations” will “move to the company's plant in Oroszlany, Hungary, and bring all ZeeWeed manufacturing under one roof.”

Then there's Trojan. I don't think Trojan has been bought out. A local company, it began in 1976. It's based in London, Ontario. I remember they came forward during the Walkerton crisis. Zenon was there as well. They were there to help out.

Very early on, Trojan commenced development on a commercially viable UV disinfection system for

municipal waste water treatment, and the company was rewarded with its first system installation in Tillsonburg, Ontario. I'm a former member for Tillsonburg. I used to represent Tillsonburg, and I wanted an opportunity to mention that town.

The company grew rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s. They pioneered many innovations and installed thousands of systems in over 25 countries. By 1993, Trojan had become the world leader in UV waste water disinfection, and they acquired other technology. They got access to a process called UV oxidation. It's an advanced water treatment method that eliminates harmful micro-organisms such as *E. coli*, cryptosporidium and giardia, as well as chemical contaminants, including pesticides and herbicides.

I don't think anybody has bought Trojan yet. I hope nobody does, but this is the world that we live in.

Really, our present water technology companies, our present industries, they can move on—this legislation could help; I don't know whether they need a law to do that or not—by really improving and building on what they already do well and things that they were doing well certainly way before the Walkerton crisis. They innovate. They innovate because they're in business, and they innovate to meet market demand.

We have these companies—they've been around for years—that truly lead by example: a large number of equipment companies, engineering and consulting firms as well as research and development facilities. We have associations and institutions that underpin our water industry. Canada is home to a number of companies that have been capitalizing on the opportunity, if you will, the water opportunity.

To my mind, you can't pass a law to make this stuff happen. The key is economics. As the argument goes, in many ways, cheap water does subsidize inefficiency: Why change? There is a way to bring supply and demand back into balance. Obviously, the way of doing that is pricing. That's what concerns me when we talk about pricing. Just how is that going to be reflected in the water bills in the future for people in Ontario? The answer, from what I see proposed in this legislation, proposed in Bill 72, is more of a demand-management approach rather than the supply-oriented system that we now have in use.

In other words, don't charge according to what people can pay, but charge according to what—and it would probably be a decision made by a bureaucrat—it's felt the water is worth, taking into account development costs, delivery systems and things like that. Water does have an economic value, and water pricing policy can achieve more sustainable patterns of water use and can go a long way to continue to generate the kind of technology that is necessary for the future.

1510

However, after seeing one year of debate on the HST, the advent of eco fees on July 1 and the electricity price hikes, the question really is, do people have the stomach for this? Do they have the stomach for the McGuinty

water bill increases and, very simply, do they have any money left to pay for it?

So technology has a role to play. Demand can be reduced through improved technology, such devices as low-flow faucets. I grew up in a farmhouse. We had very limited access to water. We had several wells. My father installed the spring-loaded faucets, the taps on the faucets; once you took your hand off the tap, it shut off, just like that. In many ways, I think he was 50 years ahead of his time. Now we have the electronic version: Once you move your hands away, automatically the water shuts off. My son just bought a toilet with two buttons on top; you get a large flush or a small flush. I think that's a great idea.

I've seen tremendous advances locally, ever since the droughts that I talked about in Ontario, over the last 10 years with respect to intensive farming. When I say intensive farming, in many ways I'm referring to irrigation-based agriculture, electronic timers, obviously irrigating at night rather than on those hot, sunny, windy days in July and August, and the use of drip irrigation. I'm very proud of the fact that when we were in government, we put forward a considerable amount of money, grants, to foster technology like that drip irrigation, for example.

Technology can be instrumental in any future success in achieving sustainability and better management. I mention desalination, micro-filtration, reverse osmosis and ultraviolet light. Some of the approaches can increasingly be deployed to attain a goal of sustainability in the face of droughts or changing climate, population growth, obviously, and the demands of either affluence or poverty. New technology can also facilitate the deployment of cost-effective, decentralized systems to supplement the gigantic, traditional large-scale water treatment works.

But I also feel that technology may not be a sufficient condition for successful water management in the future, given the additional importance of pricing and management. It's certainly a necessary condition. All of these conditions are necessary, really, with a growing economy, a growing population, growing affluence, and the advent of droughts and variability in our climate, all of which will continue to put pressure on a limited supply of potable water.

Not surprisingly, the market for membrane technologies in 2007 in the United States grew to be a \$2-billion industry, with an annual rate of growth of something like 8%.

I mentioned that I grew up in a climate of water scarcity. Our farm had two wells, one for the barn—that was a black sulphur well that had a Beatty water pump made in Fergus, Canada. We had a water well for the home down by the road and a cistern for runoff water from the roof. The water that came from that well by the road, our drinking water, was probably the most delicious water anywhere in the world, and guess what? With the wintertime salting of that road—and that's the Cockshutt Road that runs from Port Dover up to Brantford—it got in our well. We can no longer drink the water in that

well. If something like that were to happen in the Arabian Desert, I think somebody would be shot.

Our water for washing and laundry and dishes, washing eggs—I had a flock of laying hens—came from the roof, and that was scarce as well, especially in the summer and in the middle of the winter. That meant filling the bathtub with maybe three inches, maybe four inches of water. For that reason, we had those spring-loaded taps that I mentioned. Again, this is going back 50 years ago.

Of course we had to build and maintain our own septic bed. I have a similar system at my present home, which is on the farm right across the road from the home farm. Half the homes in my riding have their own septic system, have their own septic tank, and the others rely on wells—they've dug their own wells over the years—or, as I do, you truck water in from town. We have a system in Woodhouse township of water distribution, pretty well the same as a system I saw in Havana, Cuba: water trucks. My water bill went up \$5. I pay \$85 for a load now, and depending on whether my daughter is home or not, that's about once a month that we have to fill up our cistern.

So I personally consider water a valuable resource. I'm somewhat dismayed at the very brief amount of time the government has spent on this so far. It's a valuable resource, and much of it, in my view, relies on what I refer to as a more frugal usage of water based on access to the latest technology—although those old spring-loaded taps work pretty well.

I understand that most Canadians believe they live in one of the most water-rich nations on Earth, and I think many politicians and much of the media seem to perpetuate what could well be a myth. They repeat the notion that Canada has 20% of the world's fresh water. I've seen figures where it's closer to 7%; that's roughly equal to Canada's share of the world's land area, which is 7%. So an argument can be made that Canada's purported abundance in water is a myth.

The other thing: A very small part of our water is located close to where most of us live. Nearly half of Canadian water drains into the Arctic Ocean or into Hudson Bay. Some 12% of Canada is covered by lakes and rivers, but only 3% in inhabited regions where it can be effectively used. The Great Lakes, which were mentioned earlier, rank among the 15 largest lakes in the world, but the bulk of their volume is glacial stock left over from the melting of the continental glaciers, and the renewal of the Great Lakes is only about 1% a year.

In Canada we get rainfall, of course. We receive nearly 720 cubic miles of renewable fresh water every year; in metric, that's 3,000 cubic kilometres. So our rainfall, the water that we access in the Dominion of Canada, is about the same as in China or in Indonesia. We're dwarfed by what Russia receives. They receive 5,000 cubic kilometres and we receive 3,000 cubic kilometres. Brazil receives 8,000 cubic kilometres and the United States is not far behind Canada with respect to rainfall.

1520

One other aspect: When people talk about the crisis in the world's water and the coming crisis in water, it's not necessarily just about a crisis in supply of water to drink; it's also supply of water to grow food. By far the bulk of global water withdrawals are for agriculture—80% or more, in many nations. Again, it takes an awful lot of water to raise beef. It takes an awful lot of water to raise grain or dairy and produce milk.

I think we all understand that clean water is essential to the health of Ontario, to a prosperous Ontario. It's a very basic, essential element—there's no question—and all concerned agree that it's worthy of not only our protection but our promotion.

There's little doubt as well that the international community is beginning to put a much higher value on water. They're beginning in many ways to have a much better understanding of the importance of clean water.

A number of years ago I spent time in Kandahar. I remember buying some fruit from a roadside vendor; it was plums. I said, "I can't buy these. They're covered"—they were dirty and they had stains on them. The vendor said, "Well, that's no problem." He grabbed a handful of plums, dipped them under his table and held them in the open sewer—a black, open sewer. They came up bright and shiny, but it didn't convince me; I didn't buy them. I have not been back to Afghanistan since 1969, and I regret to—I feel that there really isn't much of a change with many of the people in that country in their knowledge of germs. I tried to explain to this guy about the concept of germs, but they were too small. He couldn't see them and I didn't get my message across.

We can help countries like this. Ontario can help; Australia can help. China will be helping or is helping. We can push our expertise beyond our boundaries and we can help out. We've learned so much since Walkerton.

Australia, for example, has had some very serious droughts, as we all know. They're on the cutting edge of sustainable water management in many, many ways. A historic drought, climate variability—it's really of Biblical proportions. It's no surprise, then, that the Australians excel at utility governance. They excel at asset management, sustainable cost recovery, water trading, efficiency and conservation, as well as technological and managerial innovation, all at a level far beyond anything found even in the west, the most arid parts of the United States—of North America, really. I think of—oh, so many. Death Valley, for example, is a desert I hitchhiked across. Much of Peru on the coast is desert.

For many of these reasons, and because of things that we're now seeing in Australia, I would put this in the foresight box: Our government made that commitment 10 years ago, and before 10 years ago, to enact better practices. We made that commitment to enact all the recommendations of the O'Connor report. We committed to the centre of excellence in Walkerton, planting the seeds for top-notch water education and top-notch training, the kind of training the Koebel brothers did not

receive in Walkerton. That said, it's important to recognize the significance of the events that surrounded the Walkerton tragedy, and the subsequent inquiry that we initiated, in focusing the province's efforts in an unprecedented vigilance towards water usage and clean water.

If I have time, I can talk a little bit of history here. This legislation was introduced on the 10th anniversary of Walkerton, for whatever reason. It was an obvious opportunity for publicity. It's something they tried to realize through this legislation. Just to go back to what happened then, it was in May 2000 when Walkerton's drinking water system became contaminated with bacteria, primarily *E. coli* 0157:H7. Seven people died, more than 2,300 became ill and the community was devastated.

There were obviously widespread feelings of frustration, anger and insecurity. Seven years previously, in 1993, 100 people died in Milwaukee because of cryptosporidium. There were problems—I'm not sure how long ago this was—in North Battleford, Saskatchewan. They suffered a tragedy with tainted water.

Just to wrap up, here are some World Health Organization figures: In 2003, they estimated that six million people died because of a lack of clean water and sanitation. So, I sincerely hope this legislation is up to the job. I'll hold my breath.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I had the opportunity to listen to my Conservative colleague, and I really want to ask him some questions that hopefully he can provide answers to.

This bill talks about exporting Ontario's water technology, but what I'm confronted with—and I see it in some communities in rural Ontario, I see it in a number of communities in northern Ontario, I see it in some of the older urban communities and I certainly see it in a great number of the First Nations—is that people in Ontario do not have access to clean, safe, reliable water. The technology exists, but the issue is one of cost.

I know of communities that have installed some of the latest water supply technology, and the complaint I hear from people in the community is, "My water bill has skyrocketed through the roof. We can't afford it. We're going to have to leave. We're going to have to move somewhere else."

First Nations know of the technology but do not have the money to be able to afford the technology. I can tell you that I've spoken with a number of municipal representatives who say, "Look, we recognize that our city is going to have to substantially improve and update our technology and our pipes, but our issue is, how do we pay for this?"

I read this legislation, which somehow seems to talk about a futuristic state of the world, but I think what people in Ontario want to know is, what is this government going to do to help us, help our communities, afford safe, clean drinking water?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I paid attention to the remarks of the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, and it confirms what I said earlier: The Tories just don't get it.

We need, and we now have, an internationally competitive industry that sells our skills here in Ontario in water management. Other countries are not only willing to pay, but it is, in fact, their demand for our expertise here in Ontario that is causing Ontario companies to grow at extraordinary rates. Why are the members of the opposition opposed to the creation of high-value, high-tech jobs? Why are they opposed to expanding our tax base? Why are they opposed to building a better future for the kids who are in our universities learning exactly these skills?

Other countries are willing to buy some really important things from Ontario. Let me list just a few: water management where scarce fresh water doesn't exist; water recovery from either salt or brackish water or from contaminated areas; and irrigation technology to enable crops to grow without the type of wasteful use that, for example, drains the entire of the mighty Colorado River long before it reaches the gulf of Baja near Mexico.

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Waste water management to minimize water usage in sewage or in municipal uses: It is not true that China, Korea and Australia are way ahead of us, as incorrectly asserted by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. Indeed, in many areas, they are behind us and trying to play catch-up. This legislation and similar legislation have fostered right here in Ontario a world-class water management industry that Ontario Conservatives have paid no attention to. They just don't get it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to compliment and give credit to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk, who has just spoken for an hour. He's our environment critic, and he provided the lead-off speech for our caucus on Bill 72, the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act. As usual, he gave a very thoughtful presentation and a detailed and constructive critique of this government's legislation in this respect.

I just want to echo a couple of his themes. He questioned where the financial analysis is. Of course, the government will have such a thing. I'm sure that there was a financial analysis provided to the Minister of the Environment of the day, John Gerretsen, when the bill was taken to cabinet initially. Unfortunately, the government has been unwilling or unable to produce that financial analysis. Surely, in these current economic times, given the state of the province's finances and of our relationship with our municipalities and so forth and the cost of living, you would anticipate and expect that the provincial government would be willing to share the facts on this so that we know how much this is going to cost. Then we can do, as we would be expected to do by the people of Ontario, a fair cost-benefit analysis of what they're proposing.

I heard one of the government members just now explain his perspective on the issue, but the fact is that if indeed Ontario companies have expertise and have an opportunity to export this expertise abroad and create jobs, I'm not sure that Bill 72 is going to enhance that. I certainly am interested in hearing more from the government as this debate unfolds, but I would also add an idea that the member for Haldimand–Norfolk expressed support for: There need to be public hearings on this bill. I think that those public hearings should be extensive. I would hope that the government is willing to allow the committee that will deal with this bill to travel so that people can have their say across the province. I'm sure there will be a lot of people who will want to come forward and ask these very questions: "What is this going to cost and to what extent is it going to represent an increase in my water bill?"

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the fact that the member from Haldimand–Norfolk ranged very widely in discussing this bill in his hour's time. He noticed something that I think is quite important which people should keep in mind: that, in fact, Ontario in the past has suffered from droughts. Those droughts can be severe—noticeable even to the member when he was a child. In fact, they would have a huge impact on our way of life, on our agricultural sector and on the food that we have available for ourselves. So when we're talking about water, we have to talk not simply about how we deal with water in our buildings, how we deal with water in our homes, but we have to be aware of the larger question of supply itself and the changing reality that we are faced with in this world, the changing reality that will mean that the interior of continents—and quite certainly we're at the interior in this place—are going to be much drier in the years to come.

When I look at this bill, I see a lack of the boldness that we really need to take on this issue. I see a failure to adequately and broadly look at the full context of the challenges that are before us and take hold of those challenges and deal with the issues that we're going to be facing environmentally and economically in the years to come.

Very shortly, I will be getting my chance to speak on this bill as well. But it is unfortunate that this act that's before us, for reasons that may become more apparent in the course of the debate, is so narrow, so vague and so unclear as to how it will be funded and how, in the end, it will be delivered.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Haldimand–Norfolk has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I thank the members who responded.

The member for Toronto–Danforth will be doing a one-hour speech. His colleague, the member for Kenora–Rainy River, made mention of the concern about the cost. The member from Wellington–Halton Hills as well has a

concern. This has to square with economics. We have a bit of a pilot project. MPP David Caplan brought in a waste water sustainability bill, and he pegged the cost at \$600 a year. I can only imagine what this government's bill is going to cost us, but we do need to have the price tag on this one. At my office, certainly since the House last sat, I've been receiving calls from people. They did not want to pay that eco fee. They made that very clear.

We door-knocked this summer. I went around to 1,500 doors in June and July. People felt they could not afford that HST. They knew it had been debated for about a year. With the electricity bill, and then you add the McGuinty water bill to that, there are people out there who do not have that extra \$5 or \$10 or \$15 in their pocket, let alone, say, \$600 down the road to pay for a water bill.

There were comments from the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, who indicated that China and Australia had not surpassed Ontario as far as water technology. Perhaps the parliamentary assistant should have rewritten her speech to indicate that Ontario would be a world leader rather than a North American leader, but I know they limited that goal, that target, to North America for a reason.

The Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's quite a shock to be back from a summer of door-knocking and now be here. It is a very different reality.

Today, for those who are joining us outside the chamber, we're debating the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act. I want to talk briefly about what the bill claims to do, and then I want to talk about the context within which this bill has been presented, the context within which Ontario is grappling with questions of water and the performance of this government when it comes to environmental issues, and then talk about what the specific weaknesses and strengths of the bill are and what I believe is needed to make it truly useful to the people of this province.

This bill claims to stimulate Ontario-based clean water industries by creating municipal demand for clean water technology and by supporting clean water technology development. It aims to reduce water use in Ontario. It sets what are called aspirational targets for water conservation. It enables the minister to require municipalities and public agencies to develop water sustainability plans and prescribe changes to plans if targets are not met. It revises the building code to include water conservation. It enables prescription of water efficiency standards for appliances and products. Those are all the stated goals of the bill before us. Those are the claims that are made for what this bill will do for this society.

I use the term "claims" when I talk about this government's bill and when I talk about this government's efforts because, in fact, this Liberal government has not delivered environmentally the way that people in Ontario need to have environmental issues delivered on. According to the Environmental Commissioner's report

last December, the current actions of this government fall 30% short of achieving the greenhouse gas reductions that were promised for 2014 and 45% short of the greenhouse gas reductions promised by 2020. I had an opportunity earlier today, in statements, to talk briefly about that, but the simple reality is this: Climate change is going to substantially affect the availability of water in this province. It will cause drought, it will cause flooding, and it will change the water regime within which we operate. And if this government cannot even meet its own targets for dealing with an issue that it says is significant to the future society as a whole, what hope is there for it to actually deliver on a smaller bill, a bill far less critical to the well-being of the province as a whole?

1540

When the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario talked about this issue, it was very clear that further actions were needed to reduce emissions from transportation. He understood the consequences of not acting: the consequences in terms of impact on infrastructure in our daily lives, the impact on the price of food.

Anyone in this chamber who works in the agricultural sector knows that it's critical to have the right amount of water at the right time. Too much, and if you are talking about plowing and seeding, you can't. Too little, and it doesn't matter what you're growing, you are not going to get a crop.

The Environmental Commissioner noted that one of the areas where, in fact, action wasn't taking place, where this government was falling down, was in dealing with transportation. The government's response to not actually delivering the goods on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation was to cut \$4 billion from the Transit City project. That will lead to delay and cancellation of long-awaited transit lines in the GTA, truncating of a project that is badly needed to reduce congestion, smog, greenhouse gas emissions. This city and this province are poorer because of that decision.

This government is failing to stem urban sprawl. When I arrived here in this chamber in 2006, we were debating the greater Golden Horseshoe smart growth plan. The plan that had initially been introduced was very extensive and had the aim of increasing the density in urban areas, reducing sprawl, reducing the spillover of urban development into greenfields. The simple reality was that that bill—step by step, page by page, clause by clause—was pruned back until when it was finally introduced for third reading, commentators like the Pembina Institute and the Neptis Foundation, who had provided background information on the original bill, said simply that it was not clear that this bill would do any different than provide business-as-usual growth, business-as-usual sprawl, business-as-usual emissions and congestion.

This government did not take the advice of those who understood what had to be done to deal with sprawl. Instead, it continues with highway expansion plans, continues with measures to get around the whole Places

to Grow Act, the ministerial zoning order for Bradford West Gwillimbury. This government, understanding the consequences of inaction, having studied the issue to the point where it was able to present detailed legislation, still was not willing to act and do what was necessary.

That is an instructive piece of history when we look at the bill we're dealing with today. It isn't just a failure to act with regard to climate targets, with regard to urban sprawl, with regard to transportation. But let's not forget that this government, in the past, has trumpeted its ability to take on the recycling issue, the waste management issue. This summer, it became clear that the government's waste reduction programs, the imposition of new eco fees on the public, were not achieving the aims that were originally set out and in fact didn't do what people expect would happen: that industry responsible for creating hazardous waste would assume the cost and responsibility for dealing with those things.

In fact, as the Toronto Star reports, Ontario's high-profile electronic waste disposal program is failing to recycle millions of computers and televisions it promised to keep out of landfill. I think that's pretty instructive. That's a high-profile program. We deal with millions of electronic objects in this society. It is of consequence to us that we are able to acquire them, concentrate them, recycle them and make sure that we don't have toxic metals and toxic chemicals going into our landfill and our water table.

The Toronto Star reported that, "In its first year, the Ontario Electronic Stewardship—a private agency created by provincial regulation—gathered only a third of the 42,000 tonnes of toxin-laced equipment it was originally supposed to collect, according to reports obtained by the Star."

Then-Environment Minister John Gerretsen wanted to know why. "I have been disappointed that (OES) haven't been able to meet the targets," Gerretsen said in an interview. "I don't know what has gone wrong."

I can tell you that there are not great mysteries here. When private industry is allowed to regulate itself, then things are not going to go according to the rosy plan that was set out by the McGuinty government. Those industries will look after their own interests first, and secondarily deal with the public policy issue.

The spokesperson for the OES, the Ontario electronic recycling group, "blamed the problems on growing pains of a new program."

They said, in terms of how it's supposed to work: "Companies or non-profits are designated as 'collectors' to pick up used electronics homeowners toss out by the millions. OES pays collectors up to \$235 a tonne out of 'eco fees' contained in the cost of each new electronic gadget sold (from \$2 to \$26 each). The OES then divides the haul from the collectors among eight approved recyclers, which extract usable components and safely dispose of toxic materials, like mercury or beryllium."

I'm addressing this whole question of failure in recycling because in the end, the credibility of this bill is based on whether or not this government has a track

record of delivering the goods. In this area of recycling, of meeting its greenhouse gas emission targets, of dealing with transportation, it's not meeting its targets. It's not meeting the goals that it has set out.

"Canada," according to the Star, "bans the export of e-waste to developing countries, but Canadian companies are allowed to ship materials to brokers in the US," and the United States "has no rules against transporting materials offshore."

"The current electronic recycling program in Ontario is a failure," said one of the people familiar with this industry.

"It doesn't meet its targets for diversion and environmentally-sound recycling. And it provides no incentive for investment into green technology and jobs in the province."

"The problems came to a head in January when Waste Diversion Ontario filed a rare 'failure to comply' notice against the OES, whose board includes Sony, Hewlett Packard and Best Buy executives. It told OES it had to do a better job of collecting the material and selling consumers on the program."

Critics, including you, Madam Speaker, when you're not in that chair, and others who are concerned about the environment in this province, say that the Ontario electronic collections system "must be more accountable because the public is supporting the program financially." People put in tens of millions of dollars a year to make this program work, and yet, as I've said to you, the program failed miserably in not meeting its targets.

The head of the organization said, "It is just our first year." But when you look at other jurisdictions, you find that they do somewhat better. Saskatchewan, in its first year, "collected 1.7 kilograms of e-waste per capita, compared to an estimated 1.3 kilograms in Ontario, the largest consumer of electronics in the country."

That this is a first-year problem, I don't buy. This is a government that announces grand programs and does not follow through on delivery. It happens more frequently than not. It is of consequence to the people of this province, and it certainly is of consequence when it comes to our discussing this bill and whether in fact it will deliver water conservation, whether in fact it will deliver economic development and whether in fact it will address the changing challenges that we face environmentally and economically in Ontario.

1550

Just to finish up on electronic waste: When it got rolling a year ago, the Ontario Electronic Stewardship had a target of 42,000 tonnes of material to collect. Only 17,000 tonnes have been collected. That's a miserable failure—only slightly more than a third. The target was downgraded to 33,000 tonnes partway through last year, but they still fell short. That's a very substantial failure.

In the end, this is a government that naively trusts industry to run programs in the public interest rather than for their own benefit—not a reasonable assumption. The consequences are too frequently very clear and negative. When we look at the energy issue, this is a government

that is ramping up hydro rates for ratepayers with little to show in terms of reduced usage or emissions. It has no current energy plan, which is an astounding thing.

Again, when I came here in 2006 the electricity supply plan was introduced, and if you remember, Speaker, it was rushed through; there were no environmental hearings. Ultimately, under the next energy minister, Mr. Smitherman, it was found to be inadequate and wanting, and was set aside. We were told at the time that a new plan would come forward dealing with conservation targets and efficiency targets, and that didn't happen.

So right now this province continues to make commitments in the billions of dollars without any coherent plan for dealing with electricity use, electricity production or electricity transmission for decades to come. That's the record of this government when it deals with large-scale infrastructure and environmental issues.

Two years ago the government called for new conservation and green energy targets from the Ontario Power Authority. They still don't have them. We still await them. This past summer, the government cut its solar feed-in tariff at the last minute when hundreds of Ontarians had put together business plans and submitted proposals based on a particular rate for the electricity they would be providing. People who had made very substantial commitments found that they were in trouble.

This government, instead of giving people confidence that it could deliver, introduced a major bump in the road. My sense is that a lot of members of this provincial Parliament received phone calls and emails from people in rural and small-town Ontario who had made the decision to go forward and were finding themselves out on a limb.

Ultimately, the government backed off, but only because it was very clear that there was going to be an explosion in rural Ontario over what people saw as their being misled—I'm being generous, Speaker, and I know there are parliamentary language rules you would enforce. They saw themselves as being misled. They were profoundly angry. That kind of approach undermines any confidence that this bill will actually deliver what has to be delivered and will actually make the differences that Ontario needs to see made.

This government plunged ahead with a billion-dollar or more smart meter program that is well over budget and is hiking consumer hydro costs without showing any evidence of reducing consumption or shifting usage. You don't have to go very far with Google to see what the American experience was with smart meters: The value of the energy they saved was less than the cost of putting in the meters. Thus, those meters had to be subsidized by electricity companies, which is why consumer groups in the United States opposed them, because they could see they weren't actually delivering reductions in energy consumption; they were adding to people's electricity bills.

Conservation and efficiency is the cheapest thing you can do in terms of providing supply. Smart meters don't meet that test, and yet we've gone ahead with that.

Instead of putting billions into people's homes to allow them to cut their electricity bills and make their lives more affordable, we put in meters that will make their lives more difficult and that will, in the end, not deliver the efficiency and conservation that Ontario needs to make sure its electricity system works well.

This government, in this bill claiming to be so advanced environmentally, is still committed to substantial construction of nuclear power plants in Ontario—construction that we can't afford; construction that will divert funds away from conservation, renewable power and efficiency; construction that will undermine the competitiveness of this province in the decades to come. That's where this government is at in the whole area of efficiency in environment and in energy.

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario has said that this province, this Liberal government, doesn't even have a comprehensive plan for efficiency and conservation. He made a number of very instructive recommendations as to how Ontario should actually be dealing with efficiency and conservation in the electricity field. He recommended "that the secretary of cabinet direct the development of a comprehensive energy conservation strategy encompassing all major energy sources used in Ontario. The strategy should be developed with public input." Now, I think that's instructive for the bill we're dealing with today, because this bill talks about accelerating water conservation technology but doesn't put forward any targets for the amount of water consumption we'll be reducing. We haven't figured it out on the energy side of the equation; we are repeating the mistakes that were made on that side of the equation.

The Environmental Commissioner's recommendations are very practical. If we need a comprehensive energy conservation strategy, we certainly need a comprehensive water conservation strategy. Why has this government not learned from the mistakes it's made in the energy field? Or do they simply see that that isn't a mistake and that's the way they operate? That they want to make sure that things are vague and they want to make sure that things are narrow so that they don't have to deal either with having their performance assessed or coming into conflict with those interests that want to have a high level of consumption? That's not clear, but to have ignored what the Environmental Commissioner has said about energy when this bill was written is a huge error.

The Environmental Commissioner recommends further that we need to "stabilize electricity policy, and provide clarity and certainty to that policy." The Environmental Commissioner recommended "that the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure move quickly to clarify the role of the integrated power system plan and to finalize the key conservation regulations and directives under the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, 2009." He's right. Frankly, we should be doing the same with water. There's no question that electricity is critical to the functioning of a society; so is water. Shut down electricity in this town and it shuts down very fast. Shut down water in this town and within hours you would

have very substantial disruptions; and I think that's a gross understatement. We don't have a comprehensive water plan for this province, and this bill isn't going to be introducing it.

The Environmental Commissioner, with regard to efficiency and conservation in the energy field, said that we needed to "examine the role of benchmarking and energy targets." The Environmental Commissioner recommends "that the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure establish targets to reduce provincial electricity consumption. These consumption targets will supplement the province's existing targets to reduce peak electricity demand and fulfill the government's commitment to build a culture of conservation." Well, yeah. With no offence to the Environmental Commissioner, you don't have to be a genius to make that recommendation. Yes, you need to set targets. They need to be clear. They need to give you a framework within which you're going to act.

1600

In the course of preparing to speak today, I came across a notation that California's target is to reduce water consumption by 20%. Well, there's no mention in this document or in any of the accompanying documentation as to how much we plan to reduce water consumption in Ontario, but certainly it would be helpful in assessing whether or not this bill was useful if we had a target that people could measure its viability against.

The McGuinty government should have learned from its experience with energy how, in fact, it needs to approach the water issue and incorporated that into the documentation before us.

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, talking about energy, "recommends that the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure establish reportable benchmarking by sector. This would assist the government in deciding whether to establish targets to reduce the use of natural gas, oil, propane and transportation fuels, and would make the targets meaningful."

In fact, with a small amount of translation, that applies entirely to what we're talking about today because there are different sectors using different amounts of water in different ways. There's the industrial sector. There's the resource processing sector. There's the food processing sector. There's industrial/commercial. There's residential. There are different areas with different potentials and different levels of consumption.

Again, this bill and the documentation that comes with the bill do not address what those targets need to be and do not talk about the sectoral needs of this province, again reflecting the fact that this bill is vague and, at the same time, narrow. It only talks about a small part of water consumption, and even then, within that it's vague.

The Environmental Commissioner "recommends that the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure develop a reporting mechanism to track progress on directives which ensures accountability and transparency." It makes sense to me. It makes sense that people would be able to track whether or not this bill, if adopted, was actually

implemented along the lines that those who put it forward claimed it would perform. That would be really useful. I don't see that here. That's something, again, that should be taken from the energy sector—from the Environmental Commissioner's recommendations on the energy sector—and put in place so that people can actually judge whether or not the government is delivering on what it says it's going to deliver on. Right now it doesn't have to deliver much of anything other than trying to get the bill passed, to say in an election leaflet coming soon to a home near you, "We have a plan." That may be the full and total function of this particular bill.

I've talked about this government's record when it comes to climate change, when it comes to energy and when it comes to dealing with waste, and in all of those areas there are substantial failings and the nature of those failings says to us that it is legitimate to have real concerns about whether or not this bill will deliver what needs to be delivered.

But I want to talk about water itself for a moment—and my colleague from Kenora—Rainy River did that earlier today—and that's that this government has also failed to protect the quality of water. The Toronto Star reported in 2008 that the Canadian Medical Association Journal noted that Ontario had 679 "boil water" alerts between 2006 and 2008—the most in any province. So, I think the simple reality is that from time to time water systems will fail, and if people are alert, monitoring and taking action to ensure that the public is protected, we shouldn't be totally surprised. But for us to have more "boil water" alerts than any other province is noteworthy.

What the Star went on to report: "Hundreds of 'boil water' advisories have been issued in Ontario in the past two years, placing communities on high alert for tainted drinking water, the Canadian Medical Association Journal reports."

"In a story published yesterday, the CMAJ reported that since 2006"—in 2006, Dalton McGuinty was Premier, just so that it's on the record—"Ontario had 679 such alerts—warnings by public health departments telling residents they cannot ensure the safety of their drinking water without boiling it first."

"But outside experts say there are many reasons why such advisories are issued, ranging from the bureaucratic, such as incomplete water sampling, to the systemic, such as problems in the water treatment plant process, to active health risks, such as toxic contamination."

"Without an analysis of the reasons for each advisory, it is not clear that water is putting people at risk, said University of Toronto professor Ron Hofmann, who specializes in drinking-water engineering...."

"The CMAJ reported nationwide figures for boil-water advisories, with Ontario, the most populous province, in the lead with 679 since 2006, followed by British Columbia with 530 and Newfoundland with 228. The CMAJ reported there were 1,766 boil-water advisories in place as of March 31, 2008."

Now, "boil water" advisories are not in place everywhere. They tend to be focused on the most disad-

vantaged communities in this province. First Nations communities are the hardest hit. Eight of 21 First Nations communities listed on Health Canada as having high-risk drinking water systems and drinking water advisories in effect are in Ontario. That's substantial for a province that went through Walkerton, understands the consequences of failing to deal with contaminated water, has made very visible and public commentary about the need to deal with it, and still, eight of 21 of the First Nations communities listed as having high-risk drinking water systems are here in Ontario.

Ontario Environment Minister John Gerretsen says that First Nations issues were among his concerns" when drafting this Water Opportunities Act: "It would not be right for Ontario to export our tremendous [water treatment] technology without first making sure that our people, including First Nations, have the best protection when it comes to the quality of their water."

I think he's right. I think it's going to be hard to sell technology abroad when people know that there are ongoing problems with water in communities in this province such that people have to boil water before they can drink it.

Chief Bryan LaForme of the Mississaugas of the New Credit, in April: "Walkerton had an effect in mainstream Ontario, but not in First Nations." Twenty-five per cent of his southern Ontario community does not have access to clean drinking water. "We're still underfunded. We're still under capacity. All my staff have to multitask."

Slow implementation of the Clean Water Act, passed in 2006: That act passed in 2006, but the source water protection plans for watersheds have only started to be developed and won't be completed until August 2012, six years; it's four years now. Those source water protection plans which we were told, and rightly, were so urgent to put together in 2006 still await that putting together, still are not complete. There are years to go before that act—part of that act—will be in effect.

What does that mean in terms of this water conservation bill that's before us today? What it says to me is that, potentially, that act before was passed in the lead-up to an election because there had to be something on an election flyer that said we were taking action on water. This may well be our 2011 election flyer water act. We will see.

This government has failed to address a number of other issues when it comes to threats to water. It continues to spread sewage sludge on farm fields, something that is a huge issue in parts of rural Ontario and a concern with regard to health and the environment. It continues to undervalue water in Ontario, creating a huge backlog of repairs and upgrades to municipal water and sewage systems.

1610

We're also a province where we have failed to address the whole issue of water bottling companies that pump out millions of litres of water from watersheds, paying virtually nothing, one cent per 3,000 litres—an amazing bargain. I'm not sure about you, Madam Speaker, but I

have had complaints from people, emails from rural communities, saying that their water tables have been affected because water bottling plants have taken so much out of their area. There's a lack of a holistic water conservation element in our school curriculums, and just in terms of the operation of the province itself, the provincial government, there's the continued sale of bottled water in schools, hospitals and government facilities.

So this is a government that has not done well on the environmental file, has had some blow-ups, particularly with the eco fees this summer; that has not delivered on efficiency and conservation in the energy file, which is a dominant file in Ontario, a dominant issue in Ontario; and one that has had substantial weaknesses when it comes to the protection of water itself. That's one context, the performance of this government, when it comes forward with a bill saying that it's going to do something about water conservation.

There is the larger environmental context; I alluded to that earlier. Climate change is shifting rain patterns so that areas that have been dry may well become much drier or, in the alternative, may have to deal with flooding. We saw the impact this summer in Russia, we saw it in China and we saw it in Pakistan. Those changes in the availability of water, the volume that is dumped on any given area at any one time, those changes are going to make it much more difficult for us to run systems well and safely, and are going to make it much more urgent to conserve our water and use it as efficiently as possible. That has to shape the way this government looks at a water conservation bill.

But there's another aspect, and that's the whole question of new industry. I gather, in many ways, that's the way those who drafted this bill felt it would be dealt with, that in fact we had to use water efficiency legislation to drive the development of water efficiency technology. But as I said right at the beginning, this bill is so narrow in its focus that I worry—and I think it's a reasonable worry—that we will only address a very small part of the market and that we have a very good chance of being left behind.

Other countries understand the need to develop new technologies. I was reading an article in the New York Times just last week. China now has one million people working in its renewable energy sector. Three years ago Germany, with 300,000 or 350,000, was the world's leader in terms of people working in that sector. But a million people in China work in that sector now—renewable energy. In five years, they have vaulted ahead. They now make more than half the world's solar panels. They, this year, will be making more than 50% of the world's wind turbines. They understand the potential for green technology to reshape industry in the decades to come. They know where the jobs are going to be; they know what the world markets are going to be; and they've decided to be very bold, very energetic, very audacious with their approach. We haven't been. We've been very narrow, and that is a huge problem for us, a huge problem for us economically and a huge problem

for us in terms of our ability to make sure that we generate the wealth in this society to allow to us live good lives.

I'll use one example. Korea, along with Japan and China, have seen renewable energy and green technology as huge growth areas. That's part of the reason that when a consortium was put together to accelerate the Green Energy Act, it wasn't headed by Ontario Power Generation and pulled together with a group of Ontario companies; it was headed by the Korea Electric Power Corporation, with their private partner Samsung, who came into Ontario.

We aren't the leader in putting together that sort of industrial consortium; the Koreans are. That's of consequence to the long-term viability of our economy and our long-term standard of living. This bill needs to avoid that timid approach that has put us in a situation where others are surging ahead while we're running to try to catch up. Some elements of the bill have the potential to be useful if the bill is amended and if the regulations that go with the bill are written in a way that understands what has to happen in Ontario.

The goal of conservation alone is important. We use too much water. If we reduce our water use, we can reduce the burden on our water infrastructure and reduce the cost of building new infrastructure. That's a simple one right there. If you're going to actually make Ontario an affordable and competitive place that's attractive for investment, having an ability to contain your infrastructure costs is of consequence to us. So, I can't argue with pushing forward on conservation. I've already made my remarks about whether what is before us is adequate, but the general idea is one that should be in place.

It makes sense to foster, in Ontario, a culture where people understand the need to conserve, where they don't see it as exotic or a problem of deprivation but as an opportunity to build their economy and protect their environment. And obviously, it's an opportunity to develop our expertise in growing markets of water conservation and efficiency.

But there are some real questions we have to ask about this bill, and that this government needs to answer about this bill, as we go forward. Will the bill, as written, keep water affordable for Ontarians? That matters a lot. Affordability is not a frill. Affordability is not just a question of trying to sound popular. Affordability has an impact in terms of jobs created and companies coming here or not coming here, but also in terms of public health.

In the 1990s, with the privatization of water supply companies in the UK under Thatcher, one of the realities there was a growth in intestinal diseases because in order to save money, people washed less—not everybody, but people who didn't have much money in first place. And so, what was a question of 10 or 20 pence that people had to put out for water—a relatively small amount of money—became an expense for those families because they had to deal with illness, and for the national health because people were getting sick.

So, water has to be affordable. People have to be able to buy water and not have to spend a lot of time thinking about whether they can wash and keep their homes and premises clean. Affordability is a key issue. This government needs to explain how this bill will be structured so that people will not be in a position where the affordability of water is going to be threatened.

Will this bill ensure that all Ontarians, including First Nations, have access to clean water? Well, the bill, as written now, doesn't seem to address that issue. My hope is that in the course of debate and hearings, the government will address that shortfall: again, an issue raised by my colleague from Kenora—Rainy River and one that has to be on our minds.

Will this bill primarily benefit corporations seeking to make a profit? There was a conference that was held in the spring by a number of companies that were looking at this Clean Water Act. A friend of mine attended that conference and reported the enthusiasm that private companies had about the restructuring they saw as potentially happening from this bill, making municipal water companies more open to privatization—acquisition by those private companies. Now, whether they were engaged in pipe dreams—I'm sorry for the pun—or whether they were engaged in a simple process of marketing a conference to some companies and made something up, I don't know, but that question needs to be addressed in the course of debate and amendment.

1620

How much will this bill help the environment? In fact, until we know what sort of targets are envisioned, what sort of real reductions in water consumption are envisioned, until we know how broad the reach of technology is going to be, we can't say. How many jobs will be created in Ontario? A similar question. Those things have to be addressed.

The bill has been commented on by a variety of people. The Ontario Water Conservation Alliance raises the question of the importance of affordability. Again, for similar reasons—for competitiveness, for health—water has to be affordable in this province. They have a concern, and I do as well, about a lack of commitment to funding to deal with the needs of small and medium-sized municipalities that may not, in fact, be in a position to make the investments that this bill may require. Some municipalities—well, all municipalities—are financially stressed at this point. Some may be stressed to the point where they can't actually deliver, period. That issue needs to be addressed.

The Ontario alliance that is pushing the idea of a conservation bill feels that there needs to be a low-income water protection program in Ontario. It would be interesting to me to hear the details of how they approach that, but I certainly think that that should be kept in mind when we're looking at affordability and the cost of investing in new infrastructure.

The environmental groups that are interested in expanding green alternatives, in expanding conservation, also want to make sure that we look at lower-cost green

alternatives. Their brief on this reads: The proposed act “should keep water affordable by promoting more efficient use of our water infrastructure investments and reduce our infrastructure deficit which will continue to grow if we rely on expanding traditional forms of water infrastructure. Integrated water systems, innovatively redesigned, can rein in infrastructure costs, save taxpayer money and ... ensure water needs are kept within the carrying capacity of watersheds.” They suggest reducing costs through green infrastructure: managed or constructed natural elements which manage water flows in the same way as grey concrete infrastructure.

I'll give you an example, and you will be familiar with this if you have ever walked down a tree-lined street as a rainstorm has started. Those trees will catch and hold large volumes of water so that you can walk relatively dryly under those trees for the first half hour or hour of a rainstorm. That investment in what's called leafy green infrastructure pays multiple benefits. If in fact there's an investment to line the streets of Ontario with trees so they can capture that water, there's less of a stormwater surge at the beginning of a rainstorm. If you have that kind of investment, you reduce the temperature on the streets, reducing demand for air conditioning in people's homes. And frankly, because it's a lot more pleasant to walk under a shady tree on a hot day, you increase the chances that people will walk rather than drive. So there are multiple benefits to that kind of infrastructure, and that kind of infrastructure should be included in this bill. It's cheaper than putting in new concrete pipes, it's cheaper than expanding that capacity underground and it provides us with multiple benefits. That sort of thinking has to be incorporated into this act to make it useful.

I have a general concern around the lack of clarity regarding purpose in the way the act will be implemented, because normally in the NDP we'd applaud initiatives to improve water conservation, but we have to start asking questions when conservation goals are combined within an act that's aimed largely at promoting industry. Although I think it makes a lot of sense to promote industry and use environmental initiatives to do so, let's make sure that there's no confusion about what has to come first. There seems to be a blurring of responsibilities—of the environment minister's to protect water resources and that of the Ontario government to promote industry.

It would be useful for us to know what actual technologies are being talked about, and my hope is that the minister will clarify that in the weeks to come. We think that it makes sense to set standards for conservation, but as I referred to earlier, given the financial condition of most municipalities, it makes sense to us as well that the whole question of affordability for municipalities is addressed in the course of bringing the bill forward.

We want to make sure that the technologies that are provided or promoted by the bill are ones that are appropriate and actually deliver savings. We do not want the water equivalent of smart meters to be imposed on

municipalities across Ontario, which will burden them with higher costs and will not lead to actual conservation or efficient use of water. One of the questions the government is going to have to answer in the course of this debate is whether or not it will be providing funding to help municipalities deal with the new initiatives that they're going to bring forward and any requirements that are going to be there to upgrade infrastructure.

It's not clear how this act will be used to promote local green jobs in the face of competition in the area of clean water technologies from foreign corporations. Are we going to have a requirement that with these new technologies there will be a domestic content clause that will increase the chances that the jobs generated by the act are actually jobs that are kept here in Ontario? Will funding that's made available actually be provided to people in Ontario for local green products?

There are concerns that this act addresses household consumption of water but not industrial consumption of water. Given that household consumption represents only about 5% to 10% of water consumption in Ontario, it says both that we are ignoring the greatest part of water consumption, if we're concerned about reducing water consumption, and also that we are ignoring the overwhelming bulk of the market for development of new water technologies. If in this bill we're only going to be addressing 5% to 10% of water consumption, then one has to ask how big an impact it's going to have and how useful it's going to be.

This bill, if written properly, could have huge beneficial impacts. If it took in the full range of water consumption, if it considered the full range of efficiency and conservation technologies, if it was given the financial support that is going to actually be needed to implement the changes that will be needed at the municipal level, this bill has the potential to be useful. But it is entirely unclear to me and, I think, other members of this Legislature as to whether or not those particular questions are going to be addressed.

We know that municipalities, which are going to be central to actually delivering the goods, are cash-strapped and pulled in a variety of directions to provide infrastructure for transportation, for waste management, and for bridges and roads. There's a lot of competition for those dollars, and whatever this bill does, it has to make sure that that question is settled so that the actual efficiency and protection of water is delivered and not simply set aside or dealt with in a way that doesn't place an unbearable burden on the backs of municipalities in Ontario.

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The Association of Municipalities of Ontario, AMO, says that for municipalities to meet the requirements of this act, expanded funding will be needed to be put in place.

The environmental groups that support the thrust of this bill call on the government to renew and continue small-systems water operating funds and take note of the special needs of small, remote and northern communities in applications to the capital water infrastructure finan-

cing program. Small, remote and northern communities may need specific financial support to prepare municipal water sustainability plans and obtain expertise to apply opportunities for greater sustainability in the plans.

Conservation may reduce costs in the long run and may do it in the short run, but in either case there are upfront capital costs, and those upfront capital costs are going to require assistance from the province to make sure they're affordable at the municipal level. We want to make sure that we don't have a system in Ontario of one tier of municipalities that has good, safe, abundant water that's affordable and another tier that doesn't have the water that it needs, can't afford water that it needs and can't be certain about the safety of that water.

One of the things I want to emphasize as we come to the end of this period is that municipal water services have to remain public. Environmental groups that support this conservation initiative say that they strongly encourage government to reinforce the principle that ownership and decision-making remain public for drinking water and waste water systems. This bill requires language addressing the protection of public ownership. There's no discussion in this bill about public-to-public partnerships between municipalities and First Nations for the provision of water. The bill doesn't talk about what happens if the water conservation plans of municipalities aren't adequate. It needs to address that. We need to know if this bill is going to be effective in blocking privatization models that include the outsourcing of water utility plant operations and maintenance, design/build operation contracts and sale of government-owned assets to private water companies.

In the end, this bill needs strong targets, it needs funding, and it needs a commitment from the government to make sure that the jobs that flow from these investments are jobs that are provided to Ontarians.

I look forward to further debate on this. It's my hope that this bill will be amended to the point where it will actually deliver the necessities that the people of this province have made very clear they need.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's a pleasure to rise and comment on the remarks of my colleague from Toronto-Danforth. Certainly it was a very wide-ranging discussion that covered many areas that actually are not included in the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, but I would like to address one of his issues in relation to cost for municipalities, and also to just remind him of what our government has been doing over the last few years.

Since 2003, the McGuinty government has committed almost \$1.8 billion for municipal water and waste water infrastructure through grant programs. In addition to that, some \$1.5 billion in affordable low-interest loans have been extended to municipalities through Infrastructure Ontario. Even very recently, on August 16, 2010, our government announced the launch of the third phase of the Ontario small waterworks assistance program to provide some \$50 million in capital funding over four

years so small communities can improve water conservation and efficiency in their water and waste water systems. So we are certainly committed to helping municipalities in their endeavours.

We feel that clearly, this is a good step forward. We have had major consultations already with stakeholders—I attended many of those myself—and bringing together industry, academia, municipalities and NGOs involved in environmental issues has been extremely instructive. Overall, we took their advice, and what you see in this bill is really a consensus view of the way we should go forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I want to commend the member from Toronto-Danforth for taking this legislation seriously. He spoke for an hour, and I thought he did a very good comparison of the approach in this legislation with the approach with respect to electricity and the Green Energy Act.

This bill could well become a pocketbook issue. That's a concern. We recognize that people are anxious about the cost of electricity. I am very concerned that if we're debating a piece of legislation now, a year or two down the road we're going to find people very anxious about the cost of their water bill. I know the member from Toronto-Danforth asked if this was affordable and he made mention of submissions he received with respect to the value of green infrastructure and better enabling us to be more efficient and more cost-effective—and in a sense, to lower the cost while bringing in improvements. I know this may have been the group the member was referring to. I was very pleased to receive the Environmental Bill of Rights registry from Ecojustice. They talked about their concerns with affordability and brought forward their suggestions for green infrastructure.

There was one thing I tried to do 25 years ago when I built my house. I'm out in the country. I wanted to run my grey water through cattails, but the zoning, the municipality, would not allow that kind of an approach, where I could essentially clean up the grey water right on my own farm. That didn't fit with the infrastructure model in place at the time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to commend my colleague from Toronto-Danforth for raising a number of issues which need to be answered with respect to this bill. I especially want to commend him for raising once again what I think is a fundamental issue in Ontario. We have literally thousands of Ontario citizens who, on a daily basis, do not have access to safe, clean, reliable drinking water. I'm talking about the great number of people who live in First Nations communities in this province. We have a government that's talking about exporting technology outside of the province but doesn't seem to have an answer for those very people who live in the province. I can tell you that there are a number of people in the province who are a bit nonplussed by this.

It would seem to me that one of the first things, one of the fundamental things, we need to do is to ensure that people who live here in our own province, who contribute whatever they can to the daily life of the province, have access to safe, clean drinking water and the technology that allows that to happen.

Yes, affordability is a very big part of the equation. In many cases, people who live in these communities simply do not have, on their own, the economic wherewithal, and yet I have not heard anything—I don't see anything in the legislation. We've had a number of people from the government stand up and speak two-minute speeches, and we heard the parliamentary assistant, but I didn't hear anyone address this issue. It seems to me that's fundamental to this. It's fine to talk about these things, but the issue of affordability for people who live in Ontario is a fundamental question that needs to be answered.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments? The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes.

Mr. Rick Johnson: And Brock.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): And Brock.

Mr. Rick Johnson: Thank you, Speaker. It's a long name.

It's a pleasure to speak today, and I appreciate the comments that were made by the members from Toronto-Danforth, Oak Ridges-Markham, Haldimand-Norfolk, and Kenora-Rainy River, particularly Kenora-Rainy River. My mother was born in Fort Frances, and I am very aware—I grew up in that area as well and spent many summers there—that water is such an important component of that riding as well.

Clean water is vital to our well-being in this province. We need to protect and conserve our water resources for us, our children and our grandchildren. Our proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act is a key part of our Open Ontario plan to make Ontario a water technology leader. It's all about exporting our water expertise and not our water resources, and there are many companies in Ontario that are already leading the way.

My colleague from the NDP who spoke said that some communities may throw up their hands and say that this act could be a burden upon them, and I would just like to relate a story from my riding, where they're viewing this as an opportunity. We've been working with a group, the representatives from the city of Peterborough, the city of Kawartha Lakes, MPs, MPPs—my colleague Jeff Leal has been involved in these conversations—where we're working with the college on trying to develop a centre of excellence for water technologies. There's great expertise that exists currently at Fleming College. Dr. Brent Wootton is working extensively on programs, and I've found him a very inspirational person to deal with on all this. We're working on that because the water in my riding has such an impact. We have the lakes of

Haliburton, which fill and sustain the Trent River system or Trent Canal system, so I really think that taking advantage of this will be a great opportunity for my community.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Toronto-Danforth has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the members from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Kenora-Rainy River, Haldimand-Norfolk, and Oak Ridges-Markham, I appreciate the time you took to comment on my speech.

I want to speak most to the remarks made by the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. There's no question that becoming a leader in water efficiency and water conservation technology could have huge benefits for us on so many levels, and there's no question that Fleming College is a place that has done some very sophisticated and useful things when it comes to efficiency and conservation. But I say to him, and I say to all the other members here, that just because you call something efficient, just because you refer to a technology as one that can provide conservation, doesn't mean that in fact you've done something that is cost-effective. And I have to say that the smart meters investment on the energy side is an example of where you can go dreadfully wrong and make an investment that doesn't deliver the goods for efficiency and conservation but does provide an economic burden that will be a problem for us for many, many years to come.

So when we look at this bill, it isn't just a question of saying we're going to develop technologies; it's a question of saying, "What is actually cost-effective, what is actually going to deliver what needs to be delivered, and how do we make that happen?"

This bill continues to suffer from a failure to define targets. There's a reference to aspirational targets. Aspirational targets are when you are eating a chocolate cake and deciding you're not going to eat the whole cake; you're just going to eat half of it. That's aspiration. What we need are real targets that will have an impact on economic development here.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important bill. I want to welcome back all the members in the House. I hope everyone had a productive summer, as I did. It allowed us the opportunity to reconnect with our constituents and partake in beautiful things happening in our ridings just like mine in Ottawa Centre. It was a busy summer, with festivals, community meetings and barbecues and picnics, but all worth every single minute, just being out with friends and neighbours and members of our families.

This is a very important issue, the issue around water, the issue around conservation of water, maintaining a clean, safe supply of water, and I'll share with you as to why it is important to me. I think members in the House have heard me speak many a time about where I was born and the country I lived in before. As many know, I

was born in Pakistan, which is a developing country, a country which is in the news a lot and which is, I think, kind of related to this particular topic—and I'll come to it in a second—a country where clean water was not available—pure and simple, period.

I remember growing up in Pakistan in a very large city, Karachi, which I believe now has close to 16 million people, where there was no clean water, where you could not just open your tap and drink a glass of water because you may be actually, in many ways, signing your death warrant by doing so, and if not, if it may not kill you, it may definitely make you extremely ill, sick. You've got hospitals just full with people who have some significant concerns or sicknesses or illness because of the water. The way you and I think of drinking water, which is by opening a tap and just filling a glass of water and drinking—that luxury does not exist.

I remember what my mother used to do before we drank. Again, not everybody can afford to buy bottled water. It's something that's not that accessible and something that we know is not good for the environment either. So what was the routine in my household when we lived in Pakistan? The water used to get boiled in a big pot every day or a couple of times a day. This is a hot country, so you have to drink a lot of water and keep yourself hydrated. You will boil the water. You bring it to 100 degrees, to the boiling point; let it boil for a while as an extra precaution to kill anything that might be in there and then you let it cool for a bit. Interestingly, after the cooling you can still see a layer of dirt just sort of filtering on top. You try to scoop that off and then you used to fill bottles to refrigerate this water. But you don't just fill it; you used to use a filter. My mother used to use cloth as a filter to then put that water in bottles so it could be put in the fridge and cooled, and then we could drink it. You have to go through that process a couple of times in order to have access to clean water.

You can imagine the great delight and surprise I had when we immigrated to Canada a good 21 years ago, where you can even take a glass and open a tap or a faucet in your bathroom and drink that water. That's number one.

Number two, in countries like Pakistan, water is not in abundant supply either. There are a couple of reasons for it. Probably one is, obviously, bad infrastructure, so there's probably a lot of wastage of water.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): I'd ask the Clerk to determine whether or not a quorum is present.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): A quorum not being present, call in the members.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is now present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm trying to recollect my thought as to where I was. I think I had filled the water in the bottles by now and I was now moving on to the supply of water.

Interjections.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: That's it. Thank you very much. Members in the rump are very helpful in that regard. This is what happens when you're off for the summer and not practising your speaking skills. You kind of get a little—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Speaking skills.

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Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Speaking skills. Thank you, member from Etobicoke North.

What I was talking about is that the next big issue in many countries, especially in developing countries, besides not having clean water and not having the technology to have clean water rapidly available, is the shortage of drinkable water. A country like Pakistan, again, has a huge ocean. The Arabian Sea is right there, but you can't just drink that water. Of course, there are desalination technologies that exist, which could be used to make that water drinkable for human consumption, but the other challenge, which I remember growing up, is around the shortage of water. My parents belonged to the middle class, so obviously they had some disposable income. We had to buy water. We had to purchase water in order to be able to consume it. That thought is a bit foreign to us.

We're talking about water for basic necessities. We buy water bottled water here, because we want cleaner water or, essentially, water on the go, and we're obviously trying to dissuade each other from that because we can use tap water or another form of transporting water. But there, you buy water for basic necessities: to drink, to use in your bathrooms, to maybe water your plants etc., which is a huge challenge and, again, a luxury that is not available to every single person. That was the other thing that obviously resulted in your behaviour as to how much water you were going to use and how you used it.

Because of that—and I'm very grateful; these are the kinds of habits you develop growing up—I am still very cognizant of the fact when I use water. So when I am brushing my teeth, the water doesn't keep flowing; I actually turn it off. It's a habit I have not been able to get rid of, and I think it's a good habit that I want to maintain. The same thing when I'm taking a shower: I frequently turn off the shower head. I don't keep it running as I'm taking my shower, because I think it's pure waste. So there is an element of conservation, because you kind of get into that habit, you get into that mode that in many ways we take for granted in our country and in our province because we have access to so much clean, fresh water delivered to us in a way that is easy to use.

The last point I would make about a country like Pakistan: What we are seeing right now with the floods that are taking place, which have impacted about 20

million people or so—and I want to congratulate our government and Ontarians for making significant donations to ensure that we help the victims of the flood in that country—really highlights that that country doesn't have a shortage of water. These monsoon rains were no doubt extraordinary, but they were not that out of the norm as well. If they had the right set of technologies and the right infrastructure, they would be able to harness so much of that water for irrigation purposes and for personal use that it could last for a few years to come. It's unfortunate to see that good water being wasted.

Why is this legislation, the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, so important? Well, for a couple of reasons. One is the issue around conservation. I think you and I and Ontarians have to do our part to ensure that we conserve water: the same thinking that we apply when it comes to the use of energy. We, as a society and as a province, have come a long way in the manner in which we use energy. I think we have become far more aware of our use of energy. We talk to our kids about it. In fact, more and more, when I go into schools and talk to children, I learn that the children are the ones who are speaking with their parents and grandparents about not wasting energy. We still have to do a lot of work on the energy side, but that type of thinking and that type of behavioural change has not crystallized 100% when it comes to the use of water. We still need to do more to ensure that we conserve water, that we monitor the way you and I use water. We need to amend our behaviour in that way. I think that's why government has a big role to play: to ensure that that behavioural change takes place. This legislation will help in setting those targets which are important, be they aspirational in nature, be they for municipal services or other public services—that the water is not being wasted and is being used in a productive fashion. That's a very important aspect of this legislation which I'm really keen about, because I think that's something we really need to pursue.

The other big aspect which has often been spoken about is that we in Ontario, given the kind of economy we have and the kind of companies that exist in this province, have access to a very large, burgeoning clean tech sector that exists in the province. There are a lot of companies which are investing and doing a lot of research and development in water cleaning technologies, and we need to make sure that we support these companies and that these companies are able to take their technology and export to other parts of the world. I was giving you the example of Pakistan, a country which has ample supply of water but not the right set of technologies that could be used to support its population.

By the creation of a water technology acceleration project, a water TAP, I think this legislation will allow our government to become a leader, to become a champion of water cleaning technologies that could be exported around the world. Not only will it result in economic good for the province, as we are trying to redevelop, re-create, re-engineer an economy for the 21st

century, but it also has a very strong element of moral good, which is something we should also be proud of, because we are helping developing countries, ensuring that they have access to good, clean, drinkable water. We know that will help them have better agriculture and a healthier population.

So there is an economic aspect to it, but there is also a moral/social aspect to it, from an international point of view, which is extremely important and needs to be highlighted.

I can tell you that we in Ottawa have a very large clean tech sector. It is burgeoning. There's a lot of research that is going on. I've met with a few companies since this legislation was introduced, talking to me about their technology and how this legislation could help them not only to meet their goals but be able to export that technology around the world.

So it's really exciting that we are moving forward from energy in other areas but putting a very significant focus, through this particular legislation, into technologies that will allow for cleaner water to come.

Of course, these technologies have a use for us in Ontario as well. Other members were talking about water advisories and other issues. Of course, we have our challenges as well. Just because we live in Ontario, we live in Canada—yes, we are one of the best countries in the world to live, but we have challenges which we need to continue to address. So these technologies have a big use at home as well.

I can speak to one of the bigger challenges we are dealing with in the city of Ottawa. It's around the municipal sewer waste getting dumped in the Ottawa River, which is a serious concern. One of the biggest reasons why it happened is because some of the technologies that were being used in terms of monitoring the gates etc., the segregation of stormwater from raw sewage, were outdated. It needed updating in terms of both infrastructure and technology used, and I'm very happy to say that all three levels of government are working together, and our government is putting in its share—one-third share—of roughly \$30 million to \$40 million in upgrading that infrastructure in the city of Ottawa.

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This summer, I had the opportunity to join both the federal government and our city government, the municipal government, in visiting some of the infrastructure projects that are going on where changes are being made to make sure that dirty, raw sewage water is not being dumped into the Ottawa River. Protecting that water source is extremely important for us. So there is that work, which is extremely important, that is going on and will continue to do so.

There are many aspects to this particular legislation. It is something that not only speaks to a broader horizon as to the kind of economy we're trying to build in the province of Ontario, but it also speaks to what's important to us—that is, to not take the water we have available to us for granted, to be able to use that water

wisely and to be sure that we are constantly teaching our children and our adults alike about conservation, because this is something that has a profound impact on our environment and on our quest to live in a sustainable fashion. We need to make sure that we have legislation like this particular one in place to ensure that we are buying things like toilet tanks etc. to ensure that we're not wasting water but that we are using it in a proper sense.

I think I have exhausted the points I wanted to make in the last 17 or so minutes. I look forward to hearing from other members and their points of view. I very much support this legislation. I look forward to the passage of this bill, because this will allow me to continue to speak with some of the companies in my riding of Ottawa Centre and in the city of Ottawa which are working on different technologies, and it will ensure that we are able to not only create jobs locally in Ottawa, but are also able to export these technologies to other parts of the world, especially to developing countries, countries like where I was born—Pakistan—so that we can help more people to ensure that there's more clean water available in those countries for use, which I think bodes well for all of us, both globally and locally.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for your indulgence.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This government is bringing in this water bill. Everybody's in favour of fresh, clean water. It's one of the essentials of life, of course, and the government has talked about that. But in all the debate that the government has had, almost an hour and 20 minutes now, they haven't mentioned what the costs of this bill are going to be to the people of Ontario. Can we afford this?

The track record of this government isn't particularly good when it comes to cost controls. When we look at the cost of electricity, the cost of hydro, and what has happened under this government, the real cost of electricity that's delivered to the house is somewhere, if you add up all the fees and the additional costs before the electricity gets to the home, around 12 cents a kilowatt hour now. Before this government was elected, the cost was somewhere around 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour. That's a huge increase. And it's not enough that they're going to increase the cost of electricity—it's going to increase even more over the next few months—but now they're going to take on water.

They tell us that water needs to be protected, that we need to become experts in water. Whenever this government touches anything, it's going to increase the costs. This government does not have a good track record in managing costs. The cost of water is going to go up. Not only have taxes and hydro costs gone up, now water is going to go up.

This government hasn't talked about what those costs are going to be and how high those costs are going to be. They haven't talked about whether water coming out of

the ground is going to be taxed or whether the wells on rural properties will be taxed. They haven't talked about that.

Given the track record of this government, I think that you can almost assume that anything that moves will be taxed. If it's still moving, they'll raise the taxes higher. Eventually, they'll kill it with a tax if they can possibly find one to do it with. The track record of this government is just not good.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I've listened to two government spokespersons speak at length and I've listened to a number of other government spokespersons speak briefly. Everyone talks about water the same way you talk about apple pie and ice cream. Everybody likes it, everybody thinks it's important, but one is given to ask, "Where is the meat in the sandwich?"

For all kinds of communities in this province—some aboriginal, some non-aboriginal—safe, clean, reliable drinking water is not a reality. For those communities, there is a very big, fundamental question: How do they afford the technology? How do they pay for the technology? I think at some point somebody from this government needs to stand up and answer that equation. Talking about apple pie and ice cream without mentioning how you get the apples, how you bake the pie and who pays for the ice cream doesn't get us very far.

I would hope that at some point the government members will get off the "I like apple pie and ice cream" line and answer some of these fundamental questions. How do communities in this province that do not have access to safe, reliable drinking water now afford the technology? Simply imposing exorbitant water rates on people is not the answer. Simply saying to municipalities, "It's your responsibility," is not the answer. We already have municipalities that have purchased new water supply technology in the last few years that know in the longer term they can't pay for it, and they're still asking this government, "How do we pay for this technology?" I hope that somebody from this government would answer that question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I certainly welcome everybody back for the fall session. I think my colleague from Ottawa Centre made some very important comments on Bill 72. As a former municipal politician in Peterborough—we are always very wise and very prudent. For at least three decades, we have set up a system of a sewer surcharge to build reserves, and then we were able to take advantage, when there were federal and provincial programs, in order to reline sewers, expand our waste water treatment plant and expand other water processing infrastructure in the Peterborough area.

I note that particularly this summer—certainly post-June 15, 2004, when we had our flood—the amount of activity. I think every street in Peterborough was torn up, doing a lot of sewer relines and putting in new sewer

pipes, bearing in mind that we had reports after our flood in 2004 regarding the infiltration of drinking water that got into the sewer system. Now we're embarking upon ways to correct that.

The other thing I think I'd note is that Siemens has a large manufacturing plant in Peterborough. I would invite everybody to join me this Friday. We are making a major announcement for an expansion of that operation. What is unique about that company in Peterborough is they're into water and waste water management equipment. They are the North American supplier for Siemens to move forward. They also have a training system at that operation in Peterborough where they train municipal employees to use their particular technology in the management of water and waste water treatment systems. So if anybody asks the question about whether this equipment will be manufactured in Ontario, Siemens in Peterborough is a great example of someone that will take advantage of Bill 72.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It is good to be back here for the fall session and to have an opportunity to raise a number of issues that have arisen over the summer that I think all of our constituents would like answers to from this government and to discuss important legislation that's coming before us, including the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, 2010.

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I note that this bill is proposed "(a) to foster innovative water, waste water and storm water technologies and services in the private and public sectors;

"(b) to create opportunities for economic development and clean-technology jobs in Ontario; and

"(c) to conserve and sustain water resources for present and future generations."

As the member from Kenora–Rainy River indicated, this is like a motherhood-and-apple-pie statement. Who wouldn't want that? But the question is, do we have to do it in this way? This is a time of tremendous economic uncertainty. We really need to look at how we're doing things in order to make the best possible use of our resources. Do we need to do this through another bureaucracy that we're going to set up for this? How much is that bureaucracy going to cost? What are they going to do with that, working within our present structures, that we couldn't already do?

I'm not sure that that has been explored already by this government, nor has it examined how much all of this is actually going to cost. As we all know, there is no such thing as a free lunch. It all comes back down to the taxpayer, and I think taxpayers are frankly fed up with being hit with taxes and charges on all sides. We've seen that as a result of the Green Energy Act. People are starting to see their hydro bills skyrocket. They can expect that they're going to significantly increase within the next year. If they think they're high now, they haven't seen anything yet. So I think it's incumbent on us to stop, take a look and reflect to see if this is the way we

really should be doing this or if we can do it in a more cost-effective way that's actually going to achieve the proposed resolution and outcomes proposed by this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Ottawa Centre has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to extend my gratitude to the members from Halton, Kenora–Rainy River, Peterborough and Whitby–Oshawa for their comments on my 20 minutes.

This is my perspective on this particular legislation. We all agree, and I think we have spoken about this at length in previous sessions in the last year, that the global economic order has changed. What we are still living through in terms of the recession which hit Ontario, Canada and globally is significant in nature. We're seeing that impact of globalization which we have been talking about for some time as to how interconnected our economies are.

In order for us to grow in that economy, we cannot continue to do things the way we did in the past. That's just a no-go. I think we all know that. We have to accept that, and we need to make sure that we come up with policies, with ideas that will help promote and grow Ontario in the 21st-century economy. We do live in a very competitive marketplace, and here is a sector where Ontario can make a remarkable difference, locally in terms of economic growth, because we have huge opportunities to be able to promote our technologies that are being researched and developed right here in the province, but by also ensuring that we take advantage of the great education system we've got and the human skills we've got and also the moral good I was speaking about by exporting these technologies and helping other countries around the world to have access to clean water.

I believe this is a win-win situation not only for Ontario and its future economic growth but also the kind of impact that our province can make globally in terms of having access to clean water. I really hope that all members will support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: This has been an interesting debate this afternoon on second reading of Bill 72, the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, which was introduced in this Legislature last May.

I was again very impressed with the presentation that was brought forward in this House this afternoon by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, who is our party's environment critic. The member some time ago had informed his constituents by way of his column—which is excellent; I would commend to it all members of the Legislature. The way that he informs his constituents of the happenings here is really commendable. The title of his column was, "How Much Will We Pay for the New Water Bill?" He outlined, I thought in a very fair and quite non-partisan way, the objectives of the bill, to try and give the government's argument an opportunity to be

aired, but at the same time asked a very valid question: "Who is paying for this bill? How much is it going to cost?"

Unfortunately, the government has not yet responded today to that very legitimate, very simple and very direct question during the course of debate on Bill 72, which again forces us to question how much it's going to cost and continue to ask that question but also to call for public hearings on this Bill 72. Assuming that the government is fully intending on passing it at second reading, and certainly they have the votes to do so, we in the opposition would urge them to consider extensive public hearings so that there is an opportunity for people who have an interest in this issue and an interest in, as we all should, the cost of their water bill.

I want to put on the record a concern from my constituency. This is an article which appeared in the summertime in the Wellington Advertiser, on July 16. It highlights a need in Centre Wellington township, where the municipal council of the township of Centre Wellington is forced to seek support from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities for infrastructure projects that need to be undertaken in our community. In fact, they are seeking a grant of \$1 million from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and a loan of \$10 million to build a new Elora sewage treatment plant, which they anticipate will cost \$16.5 million.

Now, this is a project that the provincial government is well aware of. In fact, the municipality has on a number of occasions—at least twice—made application in the last seven or eight years for assistance from the upper-tier governments. Unfortunately, this McGuinty government has been unwilling or unable or seen unfit to support our project in this way. It's most regrettable. It's something that I've certainly supported in every way I can, and I've tried to underline the need. There have been grant programs that have been opportunities for municipalities to make application, but unfortunately, this government has not supported this project in spite of the fact that the municipality is under order by the Ministry of the Environment to do this work. So the municipality would rightly argue that the Ministry of the Environment is telling them they have to do it, but unfortunately it won't support them, and it's a significant cost, of course: \$16 million. They don't have the money in their reserves, and yet they need to do this.

So I would again draw attention to the need. I think it's germane during the course of this debate to highlight that particular need because, of course, the government would have us believe that the passage of Bill 72 will provide a funding stream to enable municipalities to undertake this sort of work, although the details are very, very vague.

Again, to acknowledge the government's arguments in respect to this bill, they say that it's intended to "foster innovative water, waste water and storm water technologies and services in the private and public sectors." They say that it's intended to "create opportunities for economic development and clean technology jobs in

Ontario and to conserve and sustain water resources for present and future generations." Of course, I would suggest that all members of this House would support greater efforts to conserve and sustain water resources for present and future generations, in principle. That's something that all of us would unite behind. I know that.

I also would make reference to some of the comments from the government members with respect to the economic opportunities that may be out there worldwide in terms of selling whatever technology we have that's cutting edge to other jurisdictions. As we know, that has already taken place. I'm not sure how this bill will enhance the existing opportunities that are out there, but let's hope that it will.

Again, going back to their first proposal, it really is to foster innovative water, waste water and storm water technologies and services. Again, in principle, I don't think there's any member of this House who would speak against that objective.

Further, the bill intends to establish a corporation without share capital titled the Water Technology Acceleration Project.

The bill will require municipalities and other public agencies to submit to the minister water sustainability plans directed at attaining minister-established performance indicators and targets.

The bill is intended to create a power to bring in regulations to establish and permit water efficiency standards—again, set through regulation—prohibiting the sale of products not meeting the standard and requiring labelling to confirm compliance.

I know our party's critic, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk, has raised the idea that perhaps if we looked at the existing legislation and regulations with respect to clean water and put a greater emphasis on trying to make them work, we might in fact achieve many of the objectives that supposedly Bill 72 is intended to accomplish. In the course of the debate I think I've heard some of the members of the NDP who have pointed out that it appears that the government is giving considerable regard to the upcoming election year that we're about to embark on and probably wants to have some talking point during the course of its campaign for re-election, that they're doing something with respect to clean water; that's one of the political imperatives that is resulting in the introduction of the Water Opportunities Act.

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I would have to question how much this is going to cost municipalities. Any new downloading is not going to be greeted with a great deal of enthusiasm. Many of us were at the AMO conference in Windsor in August. Of course, our caucus had a meeting in association with that particular important stakeholder group, the municipalities of the province of Ontario. I think that they are going to be very concerned about what this is going to cost, and I know that some of the municipalities are already well aware of this bill and are starting to write us letters.

Of course, as we know, the municipal councils of Ontario are now in a period where they're seeking re-

election in many cases, and new candidates are coming forward to serve on municipal council. I commend all of those individuals for their willingness to serve their community in elected public office at the local level. Those are very important positions, and certainly I've always felt that my relationship with the municipal councils in my riding, the riding that I'm privileged to represent, is certainly one of the most important relationships that I have, and so I always seek to improve it. Again, I would suggest to you that the municipal councillors and the candidates that are seeking election in the October 25 municipal election, many of them will be very concerned about this, which represents, I would argue, another example of the McGuinty government's downloading agenda on municipalities.

In terms of our position on this bill, I think it has been clearly articulated by the member for Haldimand-Norfolk and others from our side during the course of questions and comments. We do support clean water and the promotion of clean water technology, but we believe that this bill has a hidden price tag that the government refuses to admit and acknowledge.

I know from our time in government, when we were privileged to serve on that side of the House between 1995 and 2003. For a period of time I served on two of the cabinet committees. When cabinet submissions were brought for consideration to the cabinet committees and, in turn, the full cabinet, in every submission there was a costing done on the initiative. Members of the Legislature who were privileged to serve on these committees were informed of the best estimate of what these things cost.

The government, I believe, has an estimate of what this will cost the municipalities of the province of Ontario; they will have an estimate of what it will cost the water users, the ratepayers of the province of Ontario, as a result of their plans with respect to Bill 72. But unfortunately, they're unwilling to divulge that. We're going to continue to ask for it, and I think the people of Ontario are going to continue to ask for it until the government does come clean with what this is going to cost and who's going to have to pay for the costs of Bill 72.

Our caucus also believes that the bill, in spite of the rhetoric, does very little to promote conservation and technology beyond existing regulations and government initiatives. As we know, many of the provisions of Bill 72 are not laid out in the bill itself but left to regulation at a later date, and under this particular government we would certainly question whether or not they are sincere with the objectives that they've stated and what the regulations are actually going to turn into when they're finally decided upon. Our caucus has also observed that this bill sets up yet another government-created and government-funded agency, in this case to do little more than facilitate and promote.

When we look at our party's record in office and since we've been in opposition in recent years, our party has always spoken to this issue with a great deal of interest

and commitment. When we were in government, we were committed to enacting all the recommendations of the O'Connor report, and we did establish a Centre of Excellence in Walkerton.

As well, in government we passed our own legislation with respect to this issue, called the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act, which I believe was passed into law in 2002 in the latter months of the Eves government. Unfortunately, this government, when it took office a few months later, didn't proclaim it into law and no regulations have been brought in to implement that particular bill. So even though it was passed by the Legislature—I believe it received royal assent—it was never proclaimed, which means it has never come into force. And after seven years of virtually no record on this issue, the current government is now trying to reintroduce this bill in a different way, but it's a more costly version, and that's what we see here with Bill 72.

We've heard rhetoric from the government side during the course of this debate that this bill will create jobs, and as has been the case in the past, the government seems to pull a number out of the air and then repeat it a thousand times as if to suggest that it will come true if they continue to repeat it. I don't know if they have a specific number in mind with respect to Bill 72—I haven't heard it this afternoon—but at the same time, we would challenge them on it. What we do know is that this bill, if passed, would lead to higher water rates, without question. We also question the costs that will be associated with the bill's supposed direction towards conservation.

We're told that Ontarians use twice the volume of water as many Europeans do, but beyond requesting municipal water use plans, this bill actually does little to address the main source of water loss. Apparently, we're told by experts in the field that we actually lose 25% of our water that is in the water systems due to leakage; due to aging infrastructure. If you can imagine our water systems—of course, underground pipes under the ground, out of sight, out of mind—many of the water pipes in the province of Ontario and the infrastructure are 50, 60, 70 years old. In some cases in the city of Toronto, I think it's close to 100 years old. Unfortunately, these underground pipes, as they age, tend to crack. There's deterioration. And if you can imagine the water flowing through the pipes, if there are cracks in the pipes, it leaks out into the ground around the pipes. As a result of this, of course, we have to pump more water just to keep the pipes full and keep the pressure up, and this results in a great wastage of water. I know the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association, which has been very active here at Queen's Park in recent years with informing us of these issues and these needs, would tell us that we need to spend more on infrastructure to ensure that our infrastructure is kept up to date.

The plans that this government is expecting municipalities to undertake with respect to this bill are, of course, another big issue that I've mentioned earlier but would continue to highlight. I suspect that in some municipalities it will require the hiring of additional staff,

maybe one or two new employees, just to do this work. Perhaps it will be done by consultants, but without question, a significant new cost for municipalities. It'll be especially difficult for some of the smaller municipalities in rural Ontario and some of the northern municipalities. I know that the member for Kenora-Rainy River has mentioned the needs in our most remote rural communities and our First Nation communities, which in many cases have a completely unacceptable level of public infrastructure, a level which requires a great deal of provincial assistance, which has not been forthcoming under this particular government.

Now, the minister again pretends that there will be no price tag associated with this bill, but the Premier has been unwilling to answer direct questions about the cost and, of course, this again makes us wonder. There is clearly a domino effect which the government is refusing to publicly acknowledge. It would appear that Bill 72, as I said, requires these water sustainability plans, that the implementation of the water sustainability plans will require massive upgrades in infrastructure, and we know that massive upgrades in infrastructure mean major costs to someone, ultimately, most likely, the taxpayer or the end user. We do ourselves a disservice if we run blindly into a piece of legislation that will cause massive costs to Ontarians without first being told where the funding is coming from.

As we know, the former Minister of Health and the former Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, David Caplan, introduced a private member's bill which addressed this issue some time ago. I remember it received very prominent coverage in the *Toronto Star*, and it appeared that Mr. Caplan was trying to draw attention to his work: He had a number of interesting private member's initiatives all at once. I hope that the Premier's office noticed, and I hope that that will help him in his future career opportunities. But the fact is, we were of the belief that his bill would have cost the end consumer something like \$600 a year. So it would appear that perhaps that's a number we should keep in mind as we're questioning how much this particular Bill 72 will cost.

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The environment minister has also said that the province is poised to do the same thing with clean water as it has done in bringing in the Green Energy Act. Again, that should set off alarm bells in terms of cost and also possibly the taking away of local autonomy, as was done in the Green Energy Act and the removal of some of the decision-making authority that municipalities have had in the past.

Given the fact that there was a sweetheart deal for foreign conglomerates and the trampling of municipal powers for the oversight that the Green Energy Act set in motion, we see the minister's statement as a warning of sorts as what may come.

We would have to again say that this is the late attempt for this government to reap the green headlines and then walk away from its obligations, leaving Ontario

businesses to spend time and money picking up the tab. Again, we would argue that there is a significant number of regulations and legislation on the books already with respect to this, and if they'd taken the effort of looking at the existing water regulations and water management initiatives, that might have been a better approach to achieve our clean energy goals.

While Bill 72 holds that the government would create a Water Technology Acceleration Project as an arm's-length corporation aimed at promoting Ontario's waste water sectors and assisting in the development and testing of products, the minister's staff already admit that the development and testing will come through the Ontario Clean Water Agency.

So, again, we would question if we really need a \$5-million-over-three-years think tank facilitation organization when we already have the Ontario Clean Water Agency and MaRS, of course, and other existing public agencies and bodies that might very well be able to do this.

How much will this new corporate body cost us? Section 22 states, "The minister may provide grants to the corporation for the purpose of defraying its operating costs...." Again, no clear answer to the question of, how much will this cost?

If we assume that this bill passes and we assume that the government proceeds and we assume that this will provide upward pressure on the water bills of the residents of the province of Ontario, once again we see a government that seems to be totally out of touch with the reality of many, many thousands of Ontario families who can't afford to pay for this. They can't afford, in many cases, their hydro bills. They can't afford the HST. They can't afford the eco fees that the government plans to probably reintroduce in some revised form this fall. They are just struggling day to day, week to week, month to month, to pay their bills.

I started to hear this in response to my newsletter that I sent out in the spring. The vast majority of respondents indicated to me a great deal of economic anxiety and in many cases were struggling just to get through to the end of the month to pay their bills. Many of these bills that they have to pay, they believe government should be finding a way to control or regulate. Certainly we're here to speak on behalf of those people, and we're here to stand up for them in spite of this government's continued efforts to raise taxes—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to take this time to again emphasize the issue that my colleague from the Conservative Party has raised, and that issue the government again refuses to speak to. There are all kinds of people in Ontario today who have real trouble paying their utility bills. Putting the HST on top of the utility bill has made it even less affordable for people. So one is given to ask, how do people pay to access new technology? How do they pay to set up some of the things that are called for in this legislation? The government refuses to answer. I think this is a question

that must be answered, because if the response is simply, "People will pay for it on their water bill; they'll pay for it by increasing the utility bill," that is clearly not an answer that is going to fly in a great number of communities across this province. It's not going to fly for individual people and households and it's not going to fly for those municipalities because many of them are already hard pressed. Yet, no one who has gotten up to speak for the government has addressed these issues, so I want to thank my Conservative colleague for raising these questions again.

You can have the most wonderful ideas in the world, but if you do not have a plan to pay for them and a plan to realistically implement them, then they really don't amount to anything. If you don't have a way of getting from the idea stage to the reality stage for people, then you're simply offering up political propaganda. Maybe that's what this bill really is. It is aspirational legislation as the government prepares to head into an election. Well, who is going to pay for the aspirations?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Again, it's a pleasure to rise to make a few comments in relation to the remarks of the member from Wellington-Halton Hills. During the consultation on this bill we heard about a lot of very interesting ideas for cost savings. I think one that particularly impressed me was one that in fact has been implemented in the head office of the Ministry of the Environment—the building on St. Clair Avenue.

This was an innovative idea in relation to the cooling tower. Probably most members know that cooling towers are often the largest users of both energy and water in a building. Also, cooling towers add large amounts of chemicals to the water involved. So an Ontario-based company, EnviroTower, offered a non-chemical solution to replace the traditional chemical water treatment in cooling towers. It is now installed at the Ministry of the Environment building and it has been shown that it offers an average of 15% lower energy costs and an average of 18% less water consumption. It has also eliminated toxic chemicals. It has extended the equipment life because corrosion has slowed and it has simplified maintenance.

This is just a small example but it's a demonstration project of what can be done. There are many more of these types of ideas coming from Ontario-based companies that are in fact using this technology all over the world in areas where they are much more aware of the issue of water conservation. We intend that Ontario makes sure that all municipalities are aware of these technologies, and we're confident they will introduce them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member from Wellington-Halton Hills in his presentation raised a very important question: How much will this cost? In fact, he raised that question at the beginning of his presentation and he raised that question at the end of his presentation. I raised

that question with the Premier last spring. I was told I was being short-sighted to talk about things like that. I think it's short-sighted to introduce legislation with no indication at all of the structure—where the billions of dollars will come from to move this stuff forward.

One thing that we were told was, "There will be cost savings with changes in infrastructure and fixing leaks and things like that, and that will more than pay for the cost." I don't buy into that completely. Who puts up the money upfront? The municipalities, as we know, come forward to the Ontario government for assistance. They can't be told, "Well, you go ahead and do it and then over time you'll get your money back with the savings in water usage."

If municipalities come forward to the province of Ontario with these plans, if they present the plans, there was a suggestion, "Then you get the money if you come forward with a plan." But again, that money has to come from somewhere. Is this being budgeted? Is there any indication in this Legislature of how that kind of funding mechanism would work? Is it a new mechanism or is it just basically the same old mechanism? The indication is that with conservation and people using less water, there would be savings. Well, this particular legislation really, to me, does not indicate that it would have any impact as far as conservation. So the question remains.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's always a pleasure to follow the comments of my colleague and my friend from Wellington-Halton Hills, but I'm a little disappointed. This is very typical status quo, do-nothing thinking. This is not yesterday. This is not the last century. This is the 21st century and, in part, that's why Ontarians put those people in opposition and the Liberals in government.

If this was high-tech or if this was film, all of the members here who are grumbling and wringing their hands over it would instead be fawning all over this particular act. Let me just give you some idea of the sheer scale and scope of it. The Conference Board of Canada estimates that the global market for water technology is more than—wait for it—\$400 billion, with an annual growth of up to 15%. Why do these people not want us to have a piece of that? On this side of the House we know that Ontario is a world leader. We want more of it.

Over the next 15 years, some \$37 billion is needed in investment in Ontario's water system, and our annual investment gap is about \$1.5 billion. Why don't they want to get on with it? We want to get on with it.

The member never asks the fundamental question, which is: How much will it cost to do nothing? We can now see how much it costs to do nothing through nearly 12 lost years of NDP and Conservative rule in something like electricity. We're not going to let this happen in fresh water. We're not going to see an industry that is employing some of Ontario's best and brightest dissipate.

I cannot accept the arguments put forth by the party of the Avro Arrow.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have to admit it was my fault, the Avro Arrow's cancellation. I'll have to assume responsibility for that. But the fact is that the member opposite talks about or suggests that our position is to do nothing, and in fact that is a complete mischaracterization of what our party has been suggesting.

Again, I would call the member's attention to the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act, which we passed in 2002 and which, I believe and I understand, would have been a more cost-effective way of approaching this issue. The government could have proclaimed it, but they chose, probably for political reasons, because it was our bill—they wanted to suggest that it was a bad bill because it was a Conservative initiative and that they would come up with something better. Well, it's taken them eight years and, in fact, I don't think that this bill is superior to our legislation that could have been brought into effect. Instead we have this Bill 72. It's going to be more costly.

I want to conclude by thanking my colleagues who have responded to my comments this afternoon on Bill 72. Again, I think this is a very interesting debate. It's the first day back, and I certainly extend my best wishes to all members of the House for the coming sitting of the Legislature. I think it's going to be very interesting.

I also believe that the people of Ontario, by and large, do not want to see the provincial election campaign starting now. I think that the vast majority of the people of Ontario would want the Legislature to continue to work towards the resolution of important issues and the problems that we have in our communities today. I would put that on the record. I realize there's a heightened political anticipation in the coming year and that we will be into an election year shortly, but we have a lot of work to do. I would hope that we can look at our responsibilities from that perspective and, if possible, work together towards resolution of those issues.

Once again, thank you for listening to me today and I look forward to the continued debate on Bill 72.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to make a few comments about this bill. As I said earlier, the government wants everyone to believe that this bill is apple pie and ice cream and hopes that no one will look too carefully at the fact that there is not a lot here. There is a lot of, shall we say, aspirational thinking, a government that aspires to do something, but there is not a lot here that in fact will do something.

Let me give you an idea of some of the things—it's our job in opposition to dot the i's and cross the t's and ask, "Where's the beef? Where's the meat in the sandwich?" That's what I intend to do today.

The reality today is that municipalities spend about \$1.5 billion a year on water and waste water. That's a figure that the Association of Municipalities of Ontario provides to us. About \$1.5 billion a year is what municipalities are paying. What we're also told, though, is that there is a gap of \$1.2 billion a year of work that needs to be done on water systems: things like repairing leaky pipes, replacing leaky pipes and the general upkeep of the water infrastructure. That's \$1.2 billion that needs to be spent every year just to replace and refurbish and keep the existing system operating.

Now, I would have hoped or I would have thought that one of the things we would have seen in this bill is exactly how this government would go about that. When I say \$1.2 billion, I'm not talking about adding anything new into the system, I'm not talking about finding new technologies, I'm not talking about creating a new entity or a new bureaucracy; I'm just talking about the additional work that needs to be done to sustain the water systems that we have now. An additional \$1.2 billion a year needs to be found. And yet when I look at the legislation, I look for a framework: nothing. I've listened intently to everyone who has gotten up to speak on behalf of the government today. I've asked the question several times: "Where does this money come from? Where is the financing framework? Who pays? What are the annual costs?" Nothing.

I know that in my own constituency, and everywhere else I go in the province, individual homeowners and apartment renters are already hard-pressed. People have seen a major increase in their utility bills over the past year; it doesn't matter if it is the hydro bill, the heating bill or the water bill. Then when you add in this government's HST, the utility bills have increased even more. And so people are saying, "Look, you know, speaking about our household, speaking about our apartment, speaking about our family situation, we can't afford to pay more." When I talk with municipal leaders, they're looking for where they can cut because they know their budgets are not sustainable. They're looking within their municipal budgets, "Where can we reduce expenditures? Where can we save some money?" not where can they afford to pay more. So I think any responsible government, if it's going to bring forward legislation like this, has to answer the question, "How is this going to be paid for? Who is going to pay and how much is it going to cost them?"

But we've heard none of that. Nothing. All we've heard are repetitive statements of apple pie and ice cream. "Don't you like apple pie and ice cream? I like apple pie and ice cream. I'm sure these folks over here like apple pie and ice cream." But no discussion about who pays for the apples, who bakes the pie and who buys the ice cream. And so it is almost, on this first day of debate, starting to sound like a bit of a charade. The government wants to talk about, "Oh, isn't apple pie and ice cream wonderful? Isn't apple pie and ice cream just about the most wonderful thing you've heard of? Doesn't just about everybody want apple pie and ice cream?" But

as soon as you get beyond that, this is a government with no answers—none. That has to be addressed.

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The government says that this is going to be a growth sector of the economy. I might be prepared to accept that, but within Ontario I want to ask: Where does the money come from to pay for the technology to grow the sector? If someone doesn't have the money to pay, if someone doesn't have the money to put into the technology, if someone doesn't have the money to make the additional capital outlays, how does all this get started? I've listened to some government members who say that there's a tremendous foreign need for water technology. That's true. There's a tremendous need among First Nations in Ontario for water technology, except they don't have the money to pay for it. They just don't have the money to pay for it.

If it's this government's position that they want to provide tax credits and they want to provide research and development money to develop the technology, and then they want to export the technology, all the while saying to First Nations in Ontario, "But not for you; you can't afford it," that's going to be a very interesting scenario to watch.

There are even some questions on the so-called export side that need to be answered. Haiti needs water technology. Anyone who turns on the news at night can easily come to that conclusion. There is an ongoing public health disaster in Haiti. Haiti needs water technology so that people can access clean, safe, reliable drinking water and people will not get sick and will not die. But there's a problem: Haiti doesn't have the money to pay for the technology.

Most Central American countries—every once in a while I'll get a circular from a non-government group that says, "If you'd send us \$25 today, we'd be able to provide a well for this village so that the 50 or 100 people who live in this village would be able to access safe, clean drinking water." Non-government organizations are very clear. If you look at Central American countries that have problems in terms of accessing safe, clean drinking water, they know about the technology. They just don't have the money to pay for it.

The problem in Africa of safe, clean drinking water, of adequate supply of water, is growing on an almost geometric basis every year. Anyone who reads about climate change will know that one of the areas that is supposed to be the hardest hit in terms of water shortages will be much of sub-Saharan Africa, and it's already happening. But the trouble is, most of these countries don't have the money to buy even today's water technology, not even thinking about the aspirational water technology that is becoming another one of those Liberal buzz words.

I heard some speaker speak earlier about the situation in Asia. China already has a huge problem in terms of safe, clean drinking water, but the question becomes, in a nation that still battles rural poverty among hundreds of millions of people, where do they find the money for safe, clean drinking water when they have all of these other issues to address as well?

Where I live, in the far southwestern corner of this province, right along the Minnesota border, there are a number of US states that have severe challenges in terms of access to water: North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming—you can literally cut a swath through much of the Midwestern United States and they will tell you that they're facing more and more serious water problems. But their issue, again, isn't technology. Their issue is, how are they going to build the pipelines to pipe water out of the Rocky Mountains? How are they going to build the pipelines to pipe water out of the Lake of the Woods? How are they going to build the pipelines to pipe water out of the lake that I live on and get it to where it's needed? It's not a question of whether they know how to do it. It is a question of who is going to pay the multi-billion-dollar bill to do this.

Australia: Much of the interior of Australia and much of southern Australia face severe shortages of water. Does the McGuinty government want to argue that Australia doesn't have water technology? That seems to be what's being offered up here in the apple pie and ice cream, that somehow a nation like Australia, which has been challenged by water shortages, water scarcities and a maldistribution of water resources, somehow doesn't have technology. I venture to say Australia already has a lot of the technology themselves. The problem is, who is going to pay the multi-billion-dollar costs of doing this? How do you move water from areas in northern Australia into central Australia or southern Australia, where the water is not available?

Or let's look at even some of the Arab states. Let's look at some of the states that are blessed with oil wells everywhere but don't seem to have any water wells; there are not enough of them. Again, the issue isn't technology. There are Arab states already that operate huge, huge desalinization plants, taking water out of the sea, running it through desalinization plants and producing fresh water. The technology's there. Again, though, the question is, on an ongoing basis, who is going to pay the multi-billion-dollar cost to do this?

I would have thought we'd have heard a government spokesman get up today and talk about, well, how is this going to be done? Nothing. Not a peep, which says to me this legislation really isn't legislation that, at the end of the day, has some plan of formulation, some plan of implementation. This is election campaign material. That's what it is. It doesn't have a plan for how it's going to be implemented in Ontario. It doesn't have a plan for how it's going to be implemented in terms of desperate First Nations in this province, where literally hundreds of kids may get sick every week from drinking water that is not safe, not clean, not reliable. It doesn't have a plan for how it's going to export to nations that, yes, need technology but don't have money. It doesn't have a plan for how it's going to compete with other nations, once again, that have technology but the issue is money: Who's going to pay the multi-billion-dollar bill?

I get a bit nonplussed by these situations, because the reality out there right now for hundreds of thousands of

Ontario families is that they themselves don't know how they're going to make ends meet at the end of the month. They don't know how they're going to pay the food bill, the rent bill and the hydro bill. They don't know how they're going to pay the food bill, the rent bill, the hydro bill and the water bill. Those are the practical realities that our people are facing and that people desperately want an answer to, that they hopefully want an answer to.

Yet when you look at this legislation—and I can hear the trumpets sounding and the drums beating, and I can already see Liberal members going around, beating their chests, saying, “Oh, we have the most wonderful aspirational water legislation in the world.” Well, aspirations won't put food on the table. Aspirations won't pay the water bill. Aspirations won't keep the heating on in the winter. Aspirations won't ensure that kids don't get sick from drinking water that's not safe, not clean, not reliable, which happens, as I say, virtually every day in a First Nations community in this province. If that's all this bill is, aspirational McGuinty Liberal thinking, then I think people are going to be terribly let down.

I've seen some of this aspirational thinking before. I remember a few years ago when Liberal members of this Legislature said that smart meters—they called them smart meters, although it's now clear they're not so smart—were going to lead us into a culture of conservation in electricity. Well, these meters have been implemented and put in place, and people are paying the

bills now in many communities across this province, and they aren't working. They are not so smart at all. They're very expensive—very, very expensive, to the tune of over \$1 billion to put them in place—but they don't deliver the results that we want. There's a good reason for that. Human beings are not nocturnal animals. You're not going to send your kids to school at midnight. The doctor's office isn't going to open at 1 a.m. so you can have an appointment and not use the electricity during the daytime. We are not raccoons and rattlesnakes. Most of our social, personal life is carried on during the day, and that is when we need energy. Putting in place an aspirational new technology gadget like a not-so-smart meter isn't going to change those realities of humanity, those realities of being people.

I say to the government that if that's all this is, aspirational propaganda for an election campaign, I think people in this province are going to have a lot to say about that, because people have some really practical problems right now, some really serious practical problems that they'd like to get some answers from their government on, and they're sure not getting it from you guys.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It being 6 of the clock, I declare that this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament



**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 14 September 2010

Mardi 14 septembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 14 September 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 14 septembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for personal thought and inner reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 13, 2010, on the motion for adoption of the recommendations contained in the final report of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I believe we have unanimous consent for the time remaining to 10:15 to be divided equally among the recognized parties.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed. The member from Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to speak to this report from the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. It's entitled, as we all know now, Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians.

I have to say from the outset that I'm especially proud of this report. It was an honour to chair this committee.

On February 24 of last year, 2009, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario gave unanimous consent to a motion by Christine Elliott to appoint a Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. That in itself, I think, is unusual in that the motion came from the opposition parties and was supported by all members in the House that day.

The committee was asked if it would consider and report its observations and its recommendations concerning a comprehensive provincial mental health and addictions strategy for the province of Ontario. It would work with consumers, survivors, providers and experts, and it was going to consider the mental health and addictions needs of various groups. Those groups were outlined; they include young adults, children, First Nations, Inuit, Métis people, seniors and francophones. The committee would identify opportunities to improve coordination and integration across the sectors for all people and examine the existing continuum of services

that were available today and the social services that went along with that.

In order to make this report possible in the way that it was presented, the members of the committee, in my opinion, conducted themselves admirably and deserve your admiration as a result of that. Members from all three political parties worked in a non-partisan manner that is more and more unusual around here these days. I'd like to thank all members for their work on the committee: Christine Elliott, from Whitby-Oshawa, was the Vice-Chair and she did a wonderful job; Bas Balkissoon, the member for Scarborough-Rouge River; France Gélinas, the member from Nickel Belt; Helena Jaczek, the member from Oak Ridges-Markham; Sylvia Jones, the member from Dufferin-Caledon; Jeff Leal, the member from Peterborough; Liz Sandals, the member from Guelph; and Maria Van Bommel, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. They all put their party affiliations behind them and served in the best interest of Ontarians. Each member volunteered to serve on the committee because of their personal commitment to mental health and addictions issues.

I'd like to thank the committee staff for the hard work that they did. Susan Sourial was clerk. Elaine Campbell and Carrie Hull were the research officers.

The people who deserve the most thanks in this entire exercise are the people who came forward to share their personal experiences of what was happening within their own families as a result of either mental health or addiction issues. They were brave, they came forward, they were courageous, and they told their stories. We held public hearings on 30 dates. We heard testimony from over 230 presenters, individuals and organizations. More than 300 submissions were received. We heard from those people providing the service today, and we heard from people who experience the mental health and addiction system directly themselves or through a family member. Personal stories were shared, and for many of these people, they were very difficult moments.

We went beyond the traditional public hearings and made site visits to various locations. The committee toured such facilities as CAMH, St. Thomas and Eva's Phoenix in Toronto. Let me tell you that we also went to several First Nations communities: Sandy Lake First Nation, the Oneida Nation of the Thames, and the Six Nations of the Grand River.

We brought forward an interim report in 2010; we brought forward the final report. I'm going to stop here because I want all members of the committee to have a

chance to speak. I will just let you know how proud I am of the conduct of this committee and how proud I am of the report and the expectations that it has created that this Legislature is going to act in the best interest of Ontarians on an issue that has been ignored for far too long.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Dufferin—Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I am pleased to stand on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to talk about my role in the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. As the Chair referenced, we're all pretty proud of the work that we were able to do, the 23 recommendations that came forward as a result of this work.

I'd also like to touch on why I asked and why I was so interested in participating in this committee. I'm sure I am not alone in talking as a member representing a riding where you try to assist family members and you try to help people who are looking for assistance with their family member, spouse or child suffering from a mental health issue or an addiction. What I quickly discovered was that there is very little help out there. I had far too many parents come to me saying that they wanted to get their 16- or 17-year-old assessed—this is not treatment; this is simply being assessed—to find out what was happening with them from a health standpoint. Unfortunately, the further I delved into the issue, I realized that children, these 16- and 17-year-olds, were going to age out—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd just ask that those conversations taking place either become much more quiet or taken outside the chamber so we can all hear.

Please continue.

0910

Ms. Sylvia Jones: As I was saying, as a member of provincial Parliament, you try to assist these family members trying to get assessments and treatments for their children. I was quickly finding out that, in fact, there were not enough services available. Assessment wasn't going to happen until the child turned 18, aged out of the children's mental health sector and, of course, then immediately went on to a waiting list for assessment under the adult mental health system.

It was an incredibly frustrating situation, so when my colleague the member from Whitby—Oshawa brought forward the resolution in December 2008 to study and thoroughly review the mental health and addictions system in Ontario, I thought it was a very good opportunity for all parties to come together on an issue that is troubling all of us. I am sure there is not a member in this House who has not heard a story and had to try to help a family navigate a system that is quite frankly far too fragmented to help anyone. So I do want to thank my colleague Christine Elliott for that work.

Of course, as a result of that December 2008 resolution which was passed unanimously, the select committee was struck. Because of my history of trying to assist families in Dufferin—Caledon, I approached the then House leader at the time, Bob Runciman, and asked

if I could participate, and here we are today almost two years later.

The previous speaker also made reference to the staff who worked with us on this committee. It was hard work. There were a lot of sad stories, a lot of tough decisions. I am particularly proud of the work that Elaine Campbell and Carrie Hull did assisting what ended up being 10 members with very strong opinions in very thoughtful deliberations. I thought they did an excellent job of putting together our thoughts and our desires into a comprehensive but ultimately very readable report.

The 23 recommendations, as we all know, were based on consensus—again, rather an unusual situation in the chamber and in a legislative process that generally spends more time on “them and us” than it does on consensus-building. I'm proud of those 23 recommendations. I'm not going to tell you that they came easily. There were some very good debates within the committee process, but ultimately, I think those debates led to thoughtful and doable recommendations.

Many of the hours that we spent debating and discussing what the recommendations could be or would be were not just pie-in-the-sky ideas. They were suggestions based on how we can do it, how we can make it better now. This is not a 20-year plan. This is not a 15-year plan. These recommendations could be implemented and done now. I truly believe that if the various ministries look at them and review them closely, they will find that they are a reasonable review of the mental health and addictions system in Ontario today.

The first main recommendation, of course, is the umbrella organization, Mental Health and Addictions Ontario. I think that as you read the report, you will realize that many of the recommendations subsequently follow from the idea that we cannot continue to piecemeal mental health and addictions services in Ontario, that we need to have an agency that ultimately has control over all aspects of it.

The history of it, I'll briefly tell you, is that we've seen some success with Cancer Care Ontario. I don't think there is a member who can say that cancer services in Ontario have not improved since the formulation of Cancer Care Ontario. We understand that every single mental health and addictions service or treatment cannot be in every single community across Ontario. What we do want to see and what we do agree with, as a committee, is that regardless of where you live, regardless of where those treatment services are, they should be available to you. That's what we're trying to do with this agency that will ultimately be there to coordinate and ensure that access is available to all Ontarians.

There are some great programs in Ontario. We saw some of them in our site visits. But ultimately, it is not consistent across the province. For whatever reason—the community getting together or some funding available at a certain point in history—there are programs that are doing excellent work in pockets across Ontario. We want to ensure that those programs ultimately become available to all Ontarians.

The other recommendation that I would like to touch on is peer support. There is a growing understanding of the value of peer support in all aspects of mental health and addictions, and ultimately health care services generally.

I remember when I participated in the Chair-leaders event in the spring. I spoke to the organizer, and they actively used peer support workers. What he told me was that when there is a spinal cord injury, peer support workers are there on-site speaking to the individual who has had an injury within hours. Initially, you would think, "That's a physical injury. They have to deal with the spinal cord injury first." But his point was, as a peer support worker, as a peer support adviser, they become part of that support system, part of that support circle that assists people as they are trying to navigate what is, for the vast majority of us, a very different experience. I see a lot of value in using and utilizing those peer support volunteers and workers.

That is, of course, one of the 23 recommendations, and I'm hoping that is something that we, again, can move forward with quickly. It doesn't take a lot of study. All you have to do is look at some of the other peer models that are taking place in other health aspects to see and understand how valuable it can be. The benefit is that that peer support, that circle, that assistance, goes all the way through from when you are initially assessed when you're choosing and deciding on your treatment; it can assist your family as they try to be part of your model of care, your assistance. I see it as a very valuable addition.

I say "addition" because it is not a medical model. We're not talking about replacing physicians and first responders. We are talking about having an additional support system helping people who are suffering through mental health and addiction services.

While we didn't write the report with a vision of who's going to like it and who isn't going to like it, it was a pleasant surprise, shall we say, to find that within a day, three provincial umbrella organizations had applauded the select committee's report on mental health and addictions. The three agencies were the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario division; the Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addictions Programs; and the Ontario Peer Development Initiative. I'm sure I'm not alone, as one of nine members of the committee, in that I've also received a number of emails, a number of phone calls, had many individuals and family members approach me who have had the chance to read the recommendations, the report, and are pleased with what we have come forward with.

Of course, after their congratulations, their next comment is, "So what's the next step?" This debate, engaging the rest of the 107 members of provincial Parliament, is certainly part of it, but ultimately we will be looking at the various ministries and the government to start implementing those 23 recommendations.

0920

There has been some movement, and an announcement I think within a couple of days from the Minister of

Health and Long-Term Care, on the OxyContin initiative, and that's a good step in the right direction. But again, I think I'd like to see a little more movement on how we can get that umbrella agency moving forward and ultimately move forward on the other 22 recommendations.

I don't want to use all of our time, because I know that the Vice-Chair, my colleague from Whitby-Oshawa, would also like to share her comments.

In closing, I would just like to thank again the many family members, agencies and organizations who took the time to appear before us, and to open their agencies and their facilities to our site visits. It made our job considerably easier to have that easy access. You answered all of our questions and took a lot of time with us, and I do appreciate that. I'll close with those thank-yous.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: As has already been said by the member from Oakville, as well as the member from Dufferin-Caledon, it was a lot of work putting those 23 recommendations together.

I knew when I started that mental health and addictions needed some work, but after 18 months, 30 days of hearings, 230 presenters and 300 submissions, I'm more convinced than ever that mental health and addictions in Ontario is in crisis. You see, I come from 25 years in health care delivery; I'm a health care worker. I worked in the intensive rehab unit with people whose lives had taken a sudden turn for the worse. They had become either amputees, quadriplegic, paraplegic, brain injured, severely burned or otherwise disabled, but I was not ready for what I was about to hear with my participation on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. Not only do people with mental health and addictions have problems gaining access to the care, support and treatment they need, but they get stigmatized and they don't even get empathy from the health care workers who are supposed to help them. We are failing thousands of Ontarians who need our help every day, with often catastrophic consequences on their health, their lives, the lives of their families, their friends and their communities.

I signed the letter asking for the report and its recommendations to be called for debate in the House at the earliest opportunity. Although I would have liked a little bit more than 20-some minutes of debate, I certainly appreciate the fact that the response to our request for the earliest opportunity was certainly acted upon, as this is only our second day back and we have a chance to debate our report in this Legislature. So I'm happy for that.

The first and most important recommendation in our report is the creation of Mental Health and Addictions Ontario, an umbrella organization. I will know that all of this hard work has paid off and has been taken seriously when the Minister of Health stands up in this Legislature and announces the creation of Mental Health and Addictions Ontario. I cannot wait for that day to happen, and I hope it happens quickly. This alone will bring a

significant improvement in the mental health and addictions system and in the lives of so many people in Ontario.

There are so many ministries right now that offer bits and parcels of mental health and addictions services, from Aboriginal Affairs to Attorney General, Children and Youth, Citizenship and Immigration, Community and Social Services, Community Safety and Correctional Services, Education, Health and Long-Term Care, Health Promotion and Sport, Seniors—and the list goes on and on. The implementation of mental health and addiction services in Ontario will be important, and we certainly would not want this to draw funds away from front-line services. By giving mental health and addiction a home, by shining a light on it, by putting someone in charge of mental health and addictions, if history repeats itself, then history has told us that that will improve quality and accountability and end up with better outcomes for the people who depend on that care, on those services, on those programs.

The second part of our first recommendation has the potential to create quite a bit of anxiety in the field: that is, bringing children and youth services under the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. I was there way back when, when children's mental health services used to be under the Ministry of Health, and it did not work out so well. This time, the transfer of children and youth back to the Ministry of Health has to be done, and it has to be done well. No one on the committee, and I think no one in Ontario, wants to bring back or subject children to institutionalization in psychiatric facilities and nursing homes, or drugging and various adverse measures such as the use of physical restraints that we saw way back decades ago. What we want, by bringing children and youth under the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, is to give young people the opportunity to form stable relationships, to gain access to social supports, strength-based intervention. We realize that they need monitoring, they need short-term crisis intervention and individual and family counselling. This is what we're trying to achieve by bringing children and youth under the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. We want these to be in place in a systemic way in communities and schools. Once those services are funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, that does not mean that it would become a medical model; it's just to make sure that the gaps in services such as the member from—I always have a hard time—Dufferin—Caledon mentioned don't exist anymore and the kid, the youth, doesn't age out of a waiting list before ever receiving any programs or services that could help them.

Data collection and accountability is one piece of the mental health and addictions system that is currently lacking. We seem to be swimming in data of all sorts, none of this is standardized, but we continue to lack accountability for the quality and types of services provided for ensuring that front-line practice matches research findings about what actually helps people with mental health and illness, and those struggling with the

challenge of addictions of all kinds. The problems in the mental health and addictions field lead to the disempowerment of consumers as well as front-line staff. There is no consistent approach by any funding body to determine which mental health and addictions organizations are providing excellent services to consumers. We know there are some excellent people out there in the field, but there is no way of telling them apart. With 440 children's mental health agencies, 330 adult mental health agencies, 150 substance abuse agencies and 50 problem gambling agencies, people told us time and time again that they could not find an agency that could help them. There were more reasons why they could not access services than there are agencies that I just named for you. Whether it was geography, language, dual diagnosis, age—there was always a reason why all of those hundreds of agencies that exist could not help them. The only meaningful way to determine quality services is through the collection of standardized data, which often includes qualitative information from the consumers themselves. They know what constitutes quality services for them and what helps them.

0930

Add to this the fact that good, competent staff often feel disempowered within their own agency or within their own field and are concerned about the treatment of their clients and the poor services that they received from other professionals, with nowhere else to turn to correct the problem. You have a system that is unaccountable, top-heavy and provides, at best, inconsistent services to clients. Where best practices do exist, they are overlooked, are not shared and do not inform practice.

Our report recommendations, once implemented, will help to change that. Everyone who came to present to the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions told us their story. There were very many similarities. They told us the same thing: Quality mental health comes from an interdisciplinary team of providers working together.

Furthermore, clinical consultation to front-line staff is often provided by supervisors who are more or less skilled in the area. The fee-for-service model of remuneration for physicians does not work when you provide mental health and addiction services, yet payment models that would include psychologists, psychotherapists, trauma specialists, developmental specialists, mental health counsellors, social workers etc., do not exist or are severely lacking. The recommendations in our report, once implemented, will change that so that we have a fee system that supports good, quality care in mental health and addiction.

We have to talk about stigmatization. We heard it over and over. It is often described as the worst barrier that people living with mental health and addiction face in society—stigma. It prevents them from having friends, from obtaining employment or even obtaining housing. Our report raised this issue. Our recommendations, once implemented, will help to change that.

It could begin with education and training at the college and university level, making sure that what is being

taught is the latest information and that it shows results. There is lots to be done. Mental health and addiction in Ontario is in crisis. I look forward to the day where we take this most important step of announcing the creation of Mental Health and Addictions Ontario. I can't wait for this day to be here.

Lorsque j'ai accepté de participer au Comité spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances, je savais que les services existants ne rencontraient pas les besoins des Ontariens et Ontariennes. Après 18 mois de travail, 30 jours d'audiences, 230 présentations et plus de 300 soumissions, je suis maintenant persuadée que la situation est urgente et qu'on ne peut pas se permettre d'attendre.

Il n'a pas été facile d'avoir un consensus de la part des trois partis politiques représentés au comité. C'est rare que l'Assemblée législative travaille de façon non partisane, mais on a réussi à le faire au Comité spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances parce que c'est tellement important d'amener des changements.

Les 23 recommandations que nous avons faites ne seront pas faciles à mettre en oeuvre, mais nous le devons à tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes qui dépendent du système de la santé mentale et des dépendances, un système qui ne rencontre pas leurs besoins, avec souvent des conséquences catastrophiques pour eux, leur famille, leurs amis et leur communauté.

J'attends avec impatience la mise en place de nos recommandations.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's certainly a pleasure—and I really mean it sincerely today—to follow the comments of my colleagues from Dufferin–Caledon and from Nickel Belt. They've mentioned the umbrella organization Mental Health and Addictions Ontario that we believe is necessary in order to focus our efforts on solving the many, many difficult issues surrounding mental health and addictions issues here in Ontario. I just want to touch on a couple of the responsibilities that we've outlined for that organization that I think are particularly important.

First of all, we see Mental Health and Addictions Ontario as being the repository of best practice of clinical practice guidelines in the field of mental health and addictions. Because we know that in fact while many organizations are providing excellent care, they are doing so in a highly fragmented way. We believe that the establishment of centres of excellence such as the one that does exist at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario as it relates to children's mental health—that concept of a centre of excellence should be extended to study First Nations' mental health and addictions issues, those issues in seniors, those issues in the francophone community. We believe that Mental Health and Addictions Ontario will be the organization best able to disseminate this best-practice information to practitioners in the field.

Another responsibility is to ensure that those who first encounter individuals with mental health and addictions issues have the appropriate tools to actually diagnose the condition—in other words, early assessment tools. Family physicians are often quite bereft of the tools that they need. They often consider that if a child in particular is brought to them by parents, there's a behavioural issue; it's a stage in their life. The parent knows something is wrong. The doctor does not have any easy way of diagnosing a serious mental illness, and in fact many times they fail to do so. In fact, I would say some of the most compelling stories we heard were from parents of children who took their loved one to the physician many times before the child was finally in a crisis in the emergency department in a psychotic state. Their stories were heart-rending. We have to do better in this regard, not only in the family physician's office but also in the workplace, wherever there's a potential for people to notice that someone is not functioning as they normally would. They need the appropriate care in a timely fashion.

The third area of responsibility that we've put to Mental Health and Addictions Ontario is to develop a wait-time strategy. As one parent said, "If I took my child to the doctor and they had the symptoms of diabetes and the physician took blood sugar, that child would be treated immediately." As my colleague from Dufferin–Caledon said, children are waiting up to nine months for an assessment. This is intolerable; it cannot continue. It needs to be addressed urgently.

We've had some successes with wait-time strategies. When you measure and you know you need to improve in accordance with your best practice, you will improve. So we need to have an organization that establishes those wait times for various mental health conditions, and then we need to act on them. As my colleague from Nickel Belt said, we believe that we have reached a crisis situation in mental health and addictions in this province, and it is imperative that we move forward to solve it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It truly is an honour to rise today to add my comments to those made so eloquently by my colleague the member from Dufferin–Caledon on behalf of the PC caucus to the final report of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. Entitled *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontario*, this report is really groundbreaking for several reasons. It was released on August 26 and represents about 18 months of work resulting from a private member's bill that I had brought forward in December 2008. It was accepted by the government and was established as an all-party select committee. As you know, Madam Speaker, select committees are very unusual in and of themselves, but even more unusual was the fact that all of us as members of the community came to the same conclusions based on the powerful evidence that was presented to us by over 230 presenters representing all

regions of Ontario over the last 18 months. So I think I speak for all of the committee members when I say that we are really grateful to all of those who took the time to come and present to us; to the people who wrote the over 300 written submissions; to the many mental health and addictions facilities that gave us tours of their facilities and answered all of our many questions; and finally, to the First Nations communities who so graciously hosted us on a number of occasions.

0940

It was really a pleasure to work with my fellow members of the Legislature on this committee, and I'd like to thank them all for their dedication and commitment. I think we're all really proud of the report that we produced together.

It's my sincere hope that the select committee structure can be used for other non-partisan issues in the future so that we can all work together in the way that I believe our constituents both deserve and expect from us.

Finally, with respect to the select committee itself, I would also like to thank the staff who dedicated the same level of dedication and commitment to this project as we did. I would like to thank Elaine Campbell and Carrie Hull from legislative research services, who travelled with us and who basically helped us write the report, spent countless hours on it and were extremely patient with all of us as we made numerous revisions to the report along the way.

I'd also like to thank the clerk of the committee, Susan Sourial, for making endless arrangements, for answering our endless questions and, again, for her dedication.

Before discussing the specifics of the committee's report, I would like to note that the report itself is very brief. It's only 21 pages, with 23 recommendations. This was a conscious decision on the part of the committee. We spent hours discussing what we had heard, what were the common problems and how we could come up with solutions to try and rectify them. We did not want to produce a report that was full, dense with information, where you couldn't see the forest for the trees, so to speak. We wanted to have a series of clear, concise recommendations that could be implemented in a reasonable and practical manner.

As we conducted hearings across Ontario, we heard about many state-of-the-art programs and services that demonstrate best practices that could be replicated across the province. But we also heard about numerous gaps in services, where programs didn't exist to serve children, seniors, newcomers, First Nations—they're simply lacking. Similarly, individuals with autism, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder or a dual diagnosis are orphaned. There simply is not a place for them to receive treatment in many parts of this province.

The solution which the committee came up with is the creation of an umbrella organization, which has been mentioned by my colleagues, called Mental Health and Addictions Ontario. This body would be responsible for designing, managing and coordinating the mental health and addictions system in Ontario and for ensuring that

core programs and services would be delivered across the province. Mental Health and Addictions Ontario would be responsible to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, including children's services and children's mental health. In our view, the creation of this body would transform the delivery of mental health and addiction services in the same way that Cancer Care Ontario has been revolutionary in organizing cancer care services in this province.

Central to the work of our committee was the recognition that mental health wasn't just a health issue, but one which has affected and is affecting virtually every other ministry in the government, including Municipal Affairs and Housing, Community and Social Services, Citizenship and Immigration, the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, among others. We don't have time, unfortunately, to speak to all of these issues in the way that we would like, so I would like to concentrate on just a few issues that really spoke to me in a particularly powerful way, and I'd like to spend a few moments on some of these key recommendations.

One relates to an issue that was raised by many individuals, almost all of them family members with a loved one struggling with mental health and/or addictions issues. I can tell you that many people spoke before our committee and shared deeply personal stories, often through tears, and it was very emotional and very difficult for us, as committee members, to listen to it, but I commend them for their courage in coming before us. They were people who loved their family members—their parents, their brothers and sisters, their children—who knew that they were struggling with mental health and addictions problems, who tried repeatedly to get help for them but were unable to do so because their loved one had a right to refuse treatment, and/or they were unable to obtain information from mental health professionals due to confidentiality laws.

We also heard that, as a result, their family members ended up living in substandard housing or, in some cases, in jail or on the streets, where both their physical and mental health deteriorated. On more than one occasion we heard that their family members ultimately committed suicide.

The committee is well aware that the recommendations that we have made in this area are controversial in calling upon the Minister of Health to establish a task force of experts, mental health clients and family members to investigate and propose changes to Ontario's mental health legislation and policy pertaining to involuntary admission and treatment and to the Personal Health Information Protection Act respecting access to personal health information.

We know that any intrusion on our civil liberties is very serious, but we also know that people have a right to be well. This is an issue which has been sidestepped too many times in the past because it's fraught with political danger, but it needs to be dealt with now. As André Picard stated in his recent column in the *Globe and Mail*,

"Inaction will leave us all with blood on our hands." I couldn't agree more. We must tackle this issue.

Any discussion of mental health and addictions in Ontario necessarily involves the issue of stigma. It remains a serious impediment to treatment for many people in Ontario, particularly children. One of the most significant responsibilities of Mental Health and Addictions Ontario will be to develop strategies to reduce stigma and the harm it causes. This harm is widespread. Stigma prevents treatment and often creates lives of hardship and poverty for people because they are unable to find meaningful employment.

People are still afraid of mental illness, and what we need is a campaign to educate and inform employers in the same way that they are informed about heart disease and cancer. Why? Because even if you aren't concerned about mental illness on a human level, you should be concerned about it on an economic level. It has been estimated that mental health and addictions issues in the workplace cost upwards of \$30 billion annually to the Canadian economy, not to mention the cost of disability support programs provincially. People want to work, they want to contribute, they want to be fully participating members of our society, but much work remains to be done.

One volunteer initiative that I am aware of is called Rotary at Work, which was started by a group of Whitby Rotarians. Mark Wafer is a businessman with experience in working with people living with mental health and addictions problems, who is meeting with fellow Rotarians across the province to answer questions and dispel myths. He argues that employing people with mental health and addictions problems should not be approached as an act of charity but as a good business practice, and he has years of experience to prove it. We need more such initiatives working with Mental Health and Addictions Ontario, as well as the federal mental health commission.

I'm just wrapping up, Madam Speaker, if I may have the indulgence of a few more comments.

Our report makes 23 recommendations. Some require funding, but many do not. We understand that it may not be possible to implement all of our recommendations right away, but we are calling upon the Premier and the Minister of Health to fully implement the recommendations of this report. Anything less would do a disservice to the many Ontarians who are counting upon us to be their voice.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I, too, want to applaud the work, first of all, that was done by the members of the committee because there was certainly a lot of time and a lot of work put into the report that is being presented to the Legislature. I want to tell you, I appreciate the work that you've done. More importantly, I really appreciate the work of all those who took the time to write, to come and give submissions and to give witness to what the system is currently—how it works and, quite frankly, how it

doesn't work—so that we can learn from that collective experience that happens in Ontario when it comes to both addictions and to the mental health issue.

0950

I want to come at this from a bit of a different tack. I want to come at it as a person who is the primary caregiver for somebody who has schizophrenia. My sister Louise lives on her own now. She has an apartment in Timmins and she is a patient of the Canadian Mental Health Association. I have permission to talk about her situation. We've talked about this many a time, just so people know.

I just want to give a perspective from a family member. My mother and dad were the primary caregivers until they both passed away, and being the only son in Timmins, the only child in Timmins, it falls upon me to be my sister's sort of caregiver, in the sense of being there for her when she needs me.

There are a couple of observations I've made in the couple of years that I've had to do it. The system tries real hard. The people who work at the Canadian Mental Health Association and the people who work in various agencies who try to work with my sister and do what needs to be done so that she is able to live independently and with dignity, I have to say, are top-notch. I know that because I happen to be the father of two and the father-in-law of another who work in that field. My daughter is a nurse practitioner with the Canadian Mental Health Association directly, so she is providing primary health care needs to people who are patients of the Canadian Mental Health Association, and our youngest daughter, Natalie, is a clinician in the children's mental health field at the Timmins children's aid society. My son-in-law, who is my youngest daughter's husband, Shane—who, by the way, ran the Ironman in Louisville, Kentucky, and came in 630th out of 3,000. I think that's pretty amazing. To Shane Wakeford, congratulations from the Legislature. But he works as a counsellor at the Canadian Mental Health Association. So I am going to come at this from the perspective of a brother, a father and somebody, as a constituency person, who works in the mental health field.

Louise does well. Why? Because she has accepted that she's got a disease. That's really what it comes down to. The big problem in the mental health field is that until the person says, "I am sick and I need help," there's no way of forcing help onto them. So there are many, many people, unfortunately—I think probably a majority—who refuse help because, "There's nothing wrong with me," says the person. And so they are not taking their meds; they are not being properly assessed. They're not even getting their ODSP cheques in some cases, and in many cases are on the streets, not only in places like Toronto but in places like Kapuskasing and Timmins. I have constituents, one in particular who I can think of, without giving any names, who literally lives on the streets in Kapuskasing. Why? He's an individual, a proud, strong, strapping young man, probably in his 30s, maybe early 40s, who doesn't admit that he has schizophrenia. He has

schizophrenia or he's bipolar; I'm not quite sure what the diagnosis is. As a result, he can't get an ODSP cheque because he doesn't have a fixed address, and because he doesn't have a fixed address and he doesn't get his ODSP cheque, we've had to arrange to have the cheque sent to our office so that we can give him his cheque on a weekly basis so he can at least buy some food. The problem is, because he refuses to get any help, he doesn't get the type of support that my sister gets, that would allow him to live in an apartment or a group home and to have at least the basic needs of everyday living taken care of: his meds, personal hygiene, food, a roof over his head.

There lies the problem—there are two parts to this. The first part is, how do you deal with people who refuse help? It's a very tough question. There's one side of me, as a brother, who says, "My God, if there's something wrong with Louise, grab her, strap her down and let's make sure we do what we have to do in order to make sure Louise is safe." But you know what? She's like you and I. She's a human being. She has rights and she has the ability to say no. How do you balance off those two parts, the part of the system and the family who say, "Oh, my God, we've got to do something," and the reality that Louise is a human being with individual rights who is protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms—but more importantly, who we understand has the ability to make some decisions?

That is, I think, one of the most crucial parts of how we get services to people. We need to figure out one day how we balance off those two things. I don't know what the answer is, but I can tell you that our family has struggled with it for over 20 years. Louise went from being in a very bad state to only becoming in a very good state once she finally admitted she had a problem and she was willing to have help. Louise does quite well today, but she only does so because she admits that she has a problem and she takes her meds.

The other side of it is in the system. I got quite angry at the Canadian Mental Health Association about two years ago, after my mother passed away, because I wasn't noticing, but Louise was starting to relapse, probably because of the trauma of having lost her mother. Who knows? I'm not sure what triggered it off. Maybe having to make some financial decisions herself, something she had never had to do before—a combination of whatever it was. But she was starting to get sick again, and being that I'm not in Timmins—as everybody here, I'm here Monday through Thursday, so I'm not home during the week, and on the weekend I'm not home because I'm in some part of the riding that may not be the city of Timmins, so I don't see my sister sometimes for a couple of weeks at a time. So she came over to the house one day, because we invited her over for supper, and Louise smelled. It's not nice to say, but these things happen. That was the first indication to me that there was a problem. Where was the Canadian Mental Health Association, where was the ACT team, recognizing that that was a sign that something was going on with Louise? They said, "Listen, we can't force her to do things that

she doesn't want to do." I understand that, but that was a sign that she was relapsing. As a result, she ended up in the mental health facility at Timmins and District Hospital for probably about five to six or eight weeks.

Since then, she has not gone back. She's doing fine, but how we've had to deal with it is that I'm on the phone with her almost every day. If I'm not around, I know that I need to talk to her, and I can pretty well tell by how she talks and what she's saying to me how she is doing. Now that she's into a regimen of making sure that's she's taking care of her basic needs and personal hygiene, keeping her apartment clean, cooking and doing the things that she needs to do, she is doing quite well.

The other part of this is—and I don't know how you deal with this—how do families find the strength, the courage and the empowerment to actually be that person who needs to provide the support to the family member who is sick? Because it isn't easy. I look at many of my constituents—and we all have them in our constituency offices on a regular basis; you know what I talk of. A person comes in and is totally irrational, is mad at the parents and mad at the brothers and sisters, and calls them all kinds of bad, nasty names—it's all their fault—and accuses the family of all kinds of things that may probably not be true. And so finally families go, "Whoa. I can't take this anymore."

Hence, the other problem: We need some system to bridge between that acting out on the part of the individual and giving the families the type of support that they need so they know how to deal with it and learn not to take it personally: This is not your sister, your brother, your mother or your father speaking and who really means this; this is their mental health speaking out for them, and somehow or other you need to work your way through that. I don't know how do you this, because I haven't figured it out after all these years. We need to find some way to give the families the ability to cope with that.

One other thing I want to say in passing: One of the things my son-in-law, Shane Wakeford, the one who did the Ironman, is doing—and I think this is very innovative, and good for the Canadian Mental Health Association. I give the Canadian Mental Health Association a lot of credit because they're pretty innovative. They're always the lead for a lot of things. He said, "Listen, I would like to have a program where I can encourage people to become more physically active." It might not be running the Ironman, but it might be walking to the corner rather than taking the taxi, it might be working out in the gym, whatever it might be, so that people are able to start having a bit of a goal in life and feeling a little bit better about themselves physically, both how they look—because people like me, God knows, need all the help we can get—and in regards to how they feel in regards to their overall physical health. I've really been amazed by what's happened over the last little while, because most of the people—we know them all. They live in our communities. And with most of the people who are in this program, you can see the difference. Not only have

they become healthier, but you can see their mental health situation has improved. Why? Because they feel better about themselves.

I think there is no one answer, and I think that's probably what you heard. As I looked at the committee report very quickly, there isn't one answer. But what is clear is that we need to resource the sector properly. We have to break down the silos that prevent interaction between agencies, and help people to give consumers better choices and better information. We have to empower the families in some way so that they're better able to deal with the family member when it comes to helping make the choices that have to happen. And, God knows, at the end of the day we have to have lots of patience and lots of love for the folks, because I'll tell you, mental health issues and addiction issues are not easy to deal with. It takes lots of patience and it takes a lot of love coming from the family.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'd like to begin by thanking my colleagues on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. As the others have said, it was difficult work, but it was very rewarding to be able to come to a consensus and put forward the report.

I'd particularly like to thank the member for Whitby-Oshawa, who brought forward the motion suggesting the select committee, and the member from Oakville, who managed to keep acting as Chair and managed to keep us moving forward, however slowly.

1000

Like the member from Dufferin-Caledon—since we published the report, there has been a tremendous amount of positive feedback, both from organizations and from individuals saying, "Yes, we think you've hit the right tone here."

I'd like to thank the member from Timmins-James Bay, because the testimony he has just given is very similar to the testimony that we heard from so many people all around the province of Ontario.

I'd like to begin by reflecting briefly on what we said in our interim report, which reflected on the testimony that we heard.

One of the themes that came out very clearly in what we heard from the people who came to talk to us was the whole problem of gaps in service. We heard about gaps in geography. If you lived in one community you could get access to a children's residential program. If you lived in another community, you couldn't get access to a children's program.

We heard about age gaps. If you had a child who was 15 and had an addiction problem, you could get service, but if you had a child who was 14 or 13, maybe you couldn't get them into that program because they just happened to be the wrong age.

We heard about gaps that were based on diagnosis. There might be a mental health program and there might be developmental services, but if you were so unfortunate as to have a dual diagnosis, that is, somebody who's

developmentally delayed and who also has a mental health issue, no agency would touch you. If you happened to have mental health and addiction problems—and many of the people who have been diagnosed with mental health issues also have substance abuse issues—again, the addiction agency wouldn't take you because you had mental health problems and the mental health agency wouldn't take you because you had addiction problems. There was no place to go if you had both.

Over and over and over again, this theme came through, that despite the fact that we have over 300 adult mental health agencies and over 400 children's mental health agencies funded in the province of Ontario—that gives us something to the tune of 750 community agencies—there's still a tremendous number of gaps in service. Just having a lot of agencies doesn't do it.

That's why the select committee landed on saying that we need a central agency, which we called Mental Health and Addictions Ontario. One organization needs to be responsible for steering the ship.

From an institutional and service provider point of view, they need to be able to decide what the core services are that should be either locally available or at least accessible by referral in every community in Ontario. Then, again from an institutional point of view, they need to be able to look at each individual community and say, "What are the gaps and how do we fill the gaps?" The answer is going to be different in different communities because the gaps are different in different communities.

We need somebody to organize the service so that everybody has access, but we also need somebody who is responsible for dealing with the individuals who are the clients of the service and their families, as the member from Timmins-James Bay pointed out, and help people to navigate the system and to find those services—the mental health, the addiction and also the community services—to find their way through the maze, because so often, services might be available, but the individual who needs the service can't find the service. That's what we want the central agency to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It really is a privilege to provide some remarks this morning.

Winston Churchill once reflected that the camel was the result of a government committee trying to design a race horse. He reflected that parliamentary democracy has its shortcomings, but there's no other system in the world.

For people who look at us and our work here, perhaps question period sometimes brings out the worst in parliamentarians. The select committee that I had the privilege of serving on brings out the best in parliamentarians. I think from time to time we should look at amending our standing orders to incorporate the opportunity to have four or five select committees that work during the life of a Parliament, because it really provides the opportunities for parliamentarians to come together in common cause.

There is no question in my mind that we have all dealt, in our constituency offices, with people who face the particular challenges of dealing with mental illness or families that are dealing with mental illness, but for me personally one of the great testimonies that I heard in this area was a number of years ago by Michael Wilson, the former very distinguished finance minister for Canada, a very distinguished Canadian ambassador to the United States. Michael and his wife, Mrs. Wilson, lost their son at 15 years due to mental illness; he committed suicide. You could see the feelings of Mr. Wilson when he shared, in a very extensive interview, what should have been done and could have been done for his young son, an individual who grappled with mental illness from very early years in elementary school to the tragic end to his life at age 15.

I think that part of the testimony and the work of the committee—we heard from parents and caregivers that the struggle with mental illness is something that lasts a lifetime, when an individual, perhaps in elementary school, is indeed assessed and diagnosed and there's the real challenge to stay with that individual through their lifelong journey. One of the things that we concluded, one of the recommendations, is the need to stay with that individual through their lifelong journey, to make sure that we have an approach in Ontario that stays with that individual and stays with that family through that lifelong journey.

I want to reflect, because I was on the committee—I volunteered on the committee, because at the time I was parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. I want to reflect for a few moments on our visit to Sandy Lake, a First Nations community that is in a very isolated part of northwestern Ontario. I can say to the chief of Sandy Lake and its residents that I may never get back to Sandy Lake, but I'll never forget that experience. When you hear first-hand that a large number of their population are addicted to Percocet and OxyContin that are smuggled into that First Nations community from Winnipeg, when you look at the local graves in that community and the headstones, and when you see all the young people who are buried there, many of them as a result of suicide, you know that we can no longer turn our backs on our first citizens of our province.

One of the things that is critically important is the recommendation that provides for a common basket of services for all citizens in Ontario. You and I, Madam Speaker, believe that that is a fundamental right for citizens who live in the province, whether you are in Kenora or Cornwall or Peterborough or Petrolia or Sandy Lake or Sarnia, that you have to have that opportunity to have access to that common basket of services. In our visits to First Nations communities, when they reflect upon the impact of residential schools, the impact of losing four generations of parenting in those communities, and you can see that that has directly caused a social breakdown in the structure of many of our First Nations communities—certainly we took the time to reflect upon that.

The report is a number of recommendations. In many government reports, of course, we have witnessed in the past, there has been a multitude of recommendations. Half of them take you in one direction and the other half go in another direction. But I think it's important that this particular report provides a great framework for the future.

I'll just finish with the words of Lester Pearson, who, in April 1968, when he delivered his last speech as Prime Minister of Canada, said that a wise man once reflected that failures are only made by those who fail to dare, not by those who dare to fail. This indeed is a daring report, and Ontario cannot allow this to fail.

1010

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Let me start out by saying I was honoured to serve on the Select Committee on Mental Health, and I want to thank all my colleagues who served on that committee. I think we should all be very proud of the report that we finally came up with, because we all made major contributions in, if I could say, a very jovial manner, as my colleagues have said previously.

But I think the most important thing is this was a select committee. Members were selected because they indicated their interest to their own House leaders. And you know, by the formation of the committee, we were lucky to have a committee that had a very broad experience level: My colleague from Nickel Belt, being a former nurse and servant in the health care field, was very helpful; my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa, being a lawyer with the experience of the justice system—a system that has failed us drastically in the past—had first-hand knowledge of what has happened in our court system; and my colleague sitting next to me here, who has had experience as a former medical officer of health, and my other colleagues who have had various community experiences or experiences in agencies in their own riding or family and friends.

I have to say that because of the broad knowledge of our committee, I think we've landed on a report that this Legislature should be very proud of. I'm hopeful that the recommendations that we came up with will be implemented, and implemented in the very near future.

I just want to comment that the reason I wanted to serve on this committee is that I had a personal, personal friend of mine who suffered mental health illness, and I have to agree with my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa that today's economy—there's probably \$30 billion a year being wasted because of people who suffer from mental health illness, and it's not well coordinated, it's not well managed. My friend worked for a government agency. He was a senior executive of that agency. He suffered mental illness, and all they did was put him on disability and pay him over \$70,000 a year for seven years, until he took his life.

That was just one person, and if you look at the 12 million or so people who live in our province, there must be many, many others. So I have to agree with my col-

league that employers today are failing to deal with mental health issues in our economy, and we need to reach out to them that they need to do a better job. They do a very good job on workplace safety, workplace hazardous systems, where they train their employees. I think they need to move to recognize that mental health is a contributor to lost productivity and they need to do something in the workplace, because my friend would probably still be around and would be a person contributing to society today had the workplace recognized mental health is an issue.

I want to tell you, the committee landed on Mental Health and Addictions Ontario, and we could have stopped there. But we recognized that if we had done that, we would have left the job to someone else to decide what that agency should do, and we spent the hours dedicated and committed by everybody to go beyond the agency and create a structure which was the strategic goals. I hope the Minister of Health, when she receives this particular report, will take the necessary action, and I'm looking forward to it. Thank you very much.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. This concludes the time available, and so the House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to introduce Marilyn Lee, who is in the public gallery and who is the mother of page Chloé St. Amand.

Mr. Dave Levac: I rise to introduce the mother of our page Caelan Meggs. Mrs. Lisa Meggs is in the members' gallery on my right. I welcome her to Queen's Park and ask her to not post judgment on anybody; just enjoy the festivities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of page Rodney Ramos and the member from Davenport, to welcome his mother, Rowena, and his father, Noel, to the public gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today the new Consul General of the People's Republic of China at Toronto, Mr. Ligang Chen. He's accompanied today by Deputy Consul General Madam Zhang and Consul Ms. Wang. Please join me in welcoming our guests today.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of Legislative pages serving in the second session of the 39th Parliament and would ask the pages to form for introduction, please.

Noor Bakir, Vaughan; Megan Brian, Essex; Brandon Chan, St. Paul's; Anika Chowdhury, Trinity-Spadina; Ioana Crant, Windsor West; Thomas Davidson, Ottawa

Centre; Henry Dennis, Scarborough Southwest; Brigid Goulem, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock; Emily Goldberg, York Centre; Ziwen (Nick) Jiang, Oak Ridges-Markham; Lina Ly, Scarborough-Agincourt; Caelan Meggs, Brant—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): He's also a Leaf fan.

Christopher Millar, Simcoe-Grey; Rodney Ramos, Davenport; Emily Rempel, Kitchener-Conestoga; Alex Schmidt, Cambridge; Chloé St. Amand, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke; Audrey Steele, Sault Ste. Marie; Shanthos Thangalingam, York South-Weston; and Lathiha Thillainadarajah, Don Valley West.

Welcome to our new pages. Enjoy the session.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has given me written notice of his intention to raise a point of privilege, as required by standing order 21(c). I would like to thank the member for giving me sufficient time to review this matter.

I wish to advise that I will be deciding on this matter without further hearing directly from the member at this time, as standing order 21(d) permits me to do.

The member's point of privilege concerns regulation 233/10, made on June 2, 2010, under the Public Works Protection Act. This regulation established a geographical area in the city of Toronto to be designated a "public work" for the purposes of the act, for the period June 21 to June 28, 2010. This period of time encompassed the dates on which the G20 summit was held.

The member has asked me to find that two things about this regulation have breached his privileges: first, its promulgation without prior consultation of the Legislative Assembly, and second, the failure of the Premier and the then Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to clarify confusion the member believes existed about the scope of application of the regulation.

With respect to the first issue, it is simply the case that any regulation, made in accordance with the statute conferring the authority for it to be made, does not require the prior agreement of the House. Or, more accurately, a statute conferring the authority for future regulations represents a prior delegation by the House of the legal, moral and political sanction to the government of the day to make such regulations. There is no case for complaint by the House or any of its members when this power is validly exercised, for it was indeed previously delegated by the House itself. The House, in its wisdom, did have its say when it passed the parent statute, thereby giving its prior consent for such a regulation to be made.

Obviously the House can never foresee in advance all of the circumstances and scenarios that might give rise to a regulation being made under a statute, or what exact form or reach a regulation might have. Nevertheless, the Legislature very routinely passes legislation embedded

with regulation-making authority. When the House passes legislation that includes the power to make regulations, it is effectively waiving its privilege to have a say and to have a role in exactly what regulations say or when they are made.

With respect to the second issue, I am certain the member can appreciate that it is not for the Speaker to dictate what a government can or cannot, should or should not, have to say about any given issue except that which is bound by the rules of this House; nor can a Speaker interpret or divine what the various reactions and understandings of the public might be about any government action or statement, or a government's decision not to act or speak in a way someone might wish, or the motives, if any, of anyone in this equation.

The privileges that members individually, and the House collectively, enjoy are focused and limited and revolve principally around the right to participate in parliamentary proceedings freely and without obstruction or hindrance. Given the exact heads of privilege in the context of what I have just said about this matter, I cannot find that the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has made out a *prima facie* case for a breach of privilege or a contempt of the House.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question for the Premier: Premier, yesterday I raised the concerns of Ontario families and how they shared with me that your expensive experiments have made life a lot more unaffordable in Ontario. Dalton McGuinty showed just how out of touch he has now become when he suggested that he has a "more intelligent understanding" of Ontario families' concerns than they do.

Premier, isn't this Premier Dad routine growing a little thin?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just want to speak to one of those unaffordable experiments that my honourable colleague likes to refer to with respect to full-day kindergarten. In the riding of Niagara West-Glanbrook, there are four schools. We decided, as you know, to move ahead this September with full-day kindergarten.

In St. Joseph Separate School in Grimsby, there are 55 students enrolled in two classes of full-day kindergarten. Our Lady of the Assumption in Stoney Creek: 52 children. In College Street Public School in Smithville—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier, sorry.

I'm going to call the members on comments that they're making in reference to the Premier. I just warn you that, even under your breath, it's not acceptable to the Speaker.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I just want to speak on behalf of the families living in the riding of Niagara West-Glanbrook.

The final school I make reference to is College Street Public School in Smithville, with 81 children there. In Senator Gibson, there are 111 children who have been enrolled in full-day kindergarten. That speaks to meeting the demands of Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, let me talk more about your so-called more intelligent understanding of what families' concerns are. There is no doubt that over seven years you've displayed that you see families as a collection of two-year-olds, incapable of making priorities and decisions for themselves. Your meddling is usually restricted to banning plastic bags in the kitchen, regulating pizza days in the schools and what kind of pets people can own, but now you are moving to all new territory—

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: You're an insult to families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Economic Development will withdraw the comment she just made.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I withdraw.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Now the Premier is moving to brand new territory by telling seniors, through his smart meter tax grab, to wash their clothes and their dishes at midnight. You're forcing upon communities industrial wind farm experiments that they don't want to host.

Premier, over these last seven years, when did you decide for yourself that you know better what's best for families and neighbourhoods than they themselves do?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're aware that the leader of the official opposition opposes full-day kindergarten, notwithstanding the tremendous support shown for that initiative in his own riding.

Something else that he doesn't like are our family health teams. I want to make reference to two family health teams in the riding of Niagara West-Glanbrook. There is one in Beamsville; it has hired 10 doctors and it's providing care to 9,273 patients. There's another in Smithville; they've hired eight doctors and they are providing care to 8,282 patients. These are two family health teams meeting the needs of 17,565 people living in that community. That is very important to families living in that community.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier's "more intelligent understanding" means that Premier McGuinty believes that he knows how to spend the family budget better than families themselves do. We disagree. We believe families should be making those decisions. We believe they should be making their own choices, and they will have a choice between a leader who understands that average,

hard-working families need a breather, they need a chance to catch up, and a Premier Dad who wants to keep spending their money on his expensive experiments and pet projects.

The health tax hit families hard, and your HST tax grab, eco taxes, tire taxes, hydro rate hikes—it goes on and on. Families can no longer afford the Dalton McGuinty government that is chasing jobs from our province and holding families back.

Premier, did you change? I think so, because now families want to see a change in our province.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: If my honourable colleague criticizes me, my party and our government for investing in full-day kindergarten, that is a criticism that we embrace. If they criticize us for investing in family health teams for our families, we embrace that criticism. If they criticize us for investing in clean air for our families, we embrace that. If they criticize us for partnering with businesses and creating jobs, we embrace that criticism. We'll do what it takes to stand up for Ontario families.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. You guys are egging them on. Start the clock.

New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier—who, by that last answer, has proven he never bothered to step one foot out of his bubble this past summer. If you would have heard what I heard about the impact of your eco tax grab, your HST tax grab that added 8% to hydro bills, gasoline and average, everyday activities like getting your hair cut, you would understand that Ontario families need a break today. They can't afford—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just remind the honourable members that this is an important time of the day for not only the members here but for people viewing at home. I, too, want to hear what is going on. But one of the things that troubles me is some of the more personal shots that go across the floor, and I just ask members to be respectful of the positions that each of us brings to the chamber and not to bring it to a level of a personal attack on one another.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here's something, hopefully, Premier, that pierced your bubble: You took \$1,000 out of the pockets of hard-working Ontario families for your HST tax credit, and then you say you're going to give them \$50 back through an activity tax credit. Basically, you take a grand out of their wallets and give them back five 10s. How did you become so cynical that you believe that Ontario families are actually going to be fooled by this cheap PR stunt?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Members will please come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've had the opportunity at some length to talk about the HST. My honourable colleague continues to claim that he adamantly opposes that particular tax initiative. Again, though, he is not prepared to do anything to remove it. He also refuses to acknowledge that, in fact, as part of a broader package of tax reforms, it's accompanied by corporate tax reductions, the elimination of the capital tax, personal income tax reductions, a transition benefit, a sales tax credit and a new northern energy tax credit.

My colleague says that he's in favour of helping out families with respect to costs. We put forward an initiative. It provides some modest support for families, and it has been well received by families. It's the new children's activity tax credit.

My colleague says that he opposes that, so I ask him, on behalf of families: How can he say that he wants to help out families at the same time he opposes the new initiative to help families with the cost of activities for their children?

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Clearly, after seven years in office, Dalton McGuinty has changed. And now, Ontario families want to see change.

Premier, by your own admission just now, you called your so-called tax credit "modest." But this Premier is so out of touch that if he actually talked to hard-working families in the province, he'd hear them use the word "meagre" at best when talking about the tax credit. Premier, quite frankly, that's when they're being polite. It is not a tax credit; it's an insult to hard-working families in our province.

The \$1,000 that you took away through your HST tax grab was a long weekend's stay at the Great Wolf Lodge and a trip to Marineland, and you're giving them back a movie night. Premier, it's an insult.

When exactly did you get so out of touch with the needs of Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: For a family with two children, \$100 is \$100. I think that's not insignificant. My colleague might say it is. He—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. Stop the clock. The member from Renfrew will please come to order. If the honourable members want me to start naming members for heckling, I will start to do that. I really would prefer not to.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to draw my colleague's attention once again to a report put out by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. It concluded, "The Ontario government's HST plan is virtually revenue neutral when viewed as part of a total tax package that includes increased sales and property tax credits and a significant decrease in personal income tax rates.

"No group is significantly worse off or better off as a result of the province's HST plan. Assertions that this is a tax grab have no foundation in reality."

I would strongly recommend that report and so many others to my honourable colleague. Again, on behalf of Ontario families, I ask him to support our new children's activity tax credit.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier says when a family has two children, "\$100 is \$100." Well, Premier, whether a family has one, two, three children or it's Kate Plus Eight, \$1,000 is \$1,000 and a massive tax grab on the backs of Ontario families that they simply can no longer afford.

We're seeing the same Premier Dad approach when it comes to auto insurance in the province of Ontario as well. The Premier says that his auto insurance changes offer families a choice. But, Premier, you know that you're basically robbing families of their current coverage unless they're willing to pay a lot more.

The Premier is so out of touch, he doesn't even know that when the hard-working families of our province hear the word "choice," they know another tax grab is coming from Dalton McGuinty.

Premier, why, every time they hear you bring forward a new idea, do families know it means that life will get more expensive?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think Ontarians would be appreciative of a more expansive view of reality. I want to remind my honourable colleague that he voted against our personal income tax cuts, which, for the average family, result in a \$400 reduction in taxes.

They voted against our transition benefit of \$1,000 for a family. They voted against our new sales tax credit, which will give families who qualify \$1,040 every year. They're apparently going to vote against our children's activity tax credit, which gives an average family \$100; our northern Ontario energy credit, which is up to \$200 per family; and our senior homeowners property tax grants, which we're doubling this year to \$500.

Those are all specific initiatives that help address some of the concerns of our families when it comes to their home economics. Every time my colleague has the opportunity, he votes against that specific support that we will continue to put in place for our families.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. When the Premier first launched his smart meter scheme, he promised, "It will pay for itself." Can the Premier produce any evidence showing that smart meters are saving people money or, in fact, helping people to conserve energy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the first question on this. I know that my honourable colleague is in fact supportive of smart meters and that she would want us to do what environmentalists and many progressive observers of the use and generation of electricity have been calling for for a long time.

The smart meter, of course, is something that we put in place to enable us to lay the foundation for a smart grid, and in particular is there to ensure that consumers can avail themselves of lower rates during off-peak hours so that they can generate some benefits when it comes to their personal billing. That's the purpose of a smart meter.

We will continue to put those in place. I know that my honourable colleague, in fact, supports the use and implementation of smart meters in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ten thousand households in Toronto have been billed using so-called smart meters since 2009. Toronto Hydro has provided some details about how the program is working for these households. Can the Premier explain why consistently, for over a year now, an average of 80% of those people have been paying higher hydro rates?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: There are a number of factors that go into our hydro rates, and I think the member opposite knows that. But what surprises me is that she seems to be backing away from what I thought was a commitment that she and her critic had to the modernization of our energy infrastructure. If we're going to build a strong, reliable and clean energy system in this province, we need to modernize our energy infrastructure.

My question to the member opposite is, do you have the courage to make the decisions necessary to move us forward and modernize our energy infrastructure so we can build that strong, reliable and clean energy system?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The information we've received from Toronto Hydro shows that people are paying more. That's the bottom line. It also shows that they are not conserving energy—they are not conserving energy. Month after month, the data shows hardly any changes at all. Can the Premier explain why he spent a billion and a half dollars on a scheme that doesn't conserve energy, but does raise people's hydro rates?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I find it hard to believe that the NDP would be against an initiative that's going to modernize our energy infrastructure, that's going to provide our consumers with the opportunity to shift their use off of peak usage and that's going to provide consumers the opportunity to make choices about how they consume energy. This is an important but small part of our efforts to build that stronger, more reliable and cleaner energy system.

I would think we would have the support of that party when we're moving in that direction. Instead, she seems to want to go back to where Tim Hudak is now, and that's back to that dirty system of energy that we inherited, that weakening system of energy, that unreliable system of energy. The leader of the opposition either should get on the bus or off the bus, but the people of

Ontario deserve to know: Do you support our efforts to build a stronger energy system in this province—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier of the province. When the Premier first launched the smart meter scheme, he promised—and I will quote again—“It will pay for itself.” Five years later, we have a scheme that leaves 80% of the people paying higher rates, doesn't conserve energy and has left Ontario families on the hook for \$1.5 billion. This smart meter scheme is making eHealth look like a bargain.

How long has the Premier known that this program wasn't working, and why hasn't he shared the facts with Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.
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Hon. Brad Duguid: The fact of the matter is, we're in the process now. We've installed 4.1 million smart meters on the road to installing 4.5 million smart meters. We're on track. We're on budget.

Now, time of use is starting to roll out. Barely a million people in this province now have access to time of use, so it's still early, but the early signs are that people are shifting their use, and that's saving the system money. That's ensuring that we don't have to create more supply.

Our government has saved 1,700 megawatts of energy since we've come to office. They, when they were in office, cut conservation measures. We're now beginning to see where their real heart lies: They don't support conservation at all.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier doesn't need experts to tell him his smart meter scheme isn't working. If he asks people who have them, they can tell him very clearly. One senior wrote this to me: “I keep my house now at 60 degrees in the winter ... I shudder to think I will have to lower the thermostat even further just to pay the bill. Smart meters may be fine if a person is away all day, but definitely not people who are home.”

When was the Premier planning to admit that his smart meter program isn't nearly as smart as he originally claimed?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I said, this program is helping to give consumers the ability to shift their use. It provides incentives for them to shift their use off of peak time.

If the NDP is suggesting that we change that differential, stand up and say so now. If you want us to change that differential now without doing the due diligence that we're doing now to make sure we get that differential right, then say that, because we want to make sure that as we roll in this program—it's a new program—we're not unduly harming those who cannot shift.

There are seniors in our province who have expressed concerns about their opportunity to shift off peak use, so

we're going to bring this program in. We're going to do it smartly. We're going to do it and take the time we need to make sure we get it right. We're not going to take the advice of a party that cut conservation programs when they were in office.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Across Ontario, people have been telling us what the Premier already knows: They're paying more and electricity isn't being saved—some conservation program. Even with smart meters, energy is not being conserved.

Wendy Roussell of Brantford writes this: “I'm on CPP disability and my spouse makes minimum wage.... The combination of the HST with the so-called ‘smart meters’ have me terrified of my first hydro bill.” Only in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario are people literally terrified of their hydro bill.

Given all the information that's emerging, will the Premier now acknowledge that his multi-billion-dollar smart meter scheme might turn out to be one of his most ill-conceived and costliest ideas yet?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think what's very clear today is that the NDP have a choice to make: Ontarians deserve to know whether they're getting on the bus or whether they're getting off the bus. We know where the McGuinty government stands. We stand for making these critical investments that are needed to build a strong, reliable, clean energy system. We know—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Halton, the member from Hamilton East and the member from Oxford, please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We know where the Tories stand: They left us with a weak, unreliable and dirty system of energy seven years ago. Tim Hudak has not learned from his mistakes. He wants to take us back to where we were before.

The question, I think, to Ontarians is: Where do you stand? Are you going to be strong enough to stand with us, to make the decisions we need to make to create a strong, reliable and clean energy system in this province, or are you going to join Tim Hudak and go back to where we were seven years ago?

We're proud of the investments—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, a year ago, you, through your former energy minister, George Smitherman, said the Green Energy Act would cost families “approximately 1% per year,” but the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association says your multi-billion-dollar sweetheart deal with Samsung will add \$732 a year to the energy bills of struggling

Ontario families. Your energy schemes have Ontario families afraid to open their hydro bills.

Why did you tell Ontario families who are struggling to keep up that their energy bills would go up by only 1% when you knew they would go up by much more?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We believe in a strong, reliable and clean energy system that families and businesses in this province of Ontario can count on. Ontarians expect us to keep the lights on and they know that to build the energy supply we need to make the necessary investments to ensure that we can do that. These critical—

Mr. John Yakabuski: You used to say “affordable.”

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew, you just asked the question. When you’re heckling, I don’t know how you can hear the answer. If you’re not satisfied in the end with the answer, you can call for a late show.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: These critical investments that are needed now are needed because previous governments neglected this responsibility. The Tory system we inherited in 2003 was in shambles. It was weak, it was unreliable, it was dirty. Tim Hudak didn’t get it then when he was sitting in cabinet. He does not get it now.

Not only is our energy plan creating strong, reliable, clean energy, it’s also creating 50,000 jobs, jobs that they—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I think the minister needs some new notes.

Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters are not alone in sounding the alarm about your out-of-control green energy experiment. A September 2010 report prepared for BMO Capital Markets entitled Basic Points took note of Dalton McGuinty’s so-called Green Energy Act. They call it a “bizarre electric generation construction program based on very optimistic costs for building wind farms, and wildly optimistic expectations for their effectiveness.”

What more do you need said to understand that struggling Ontario families cannot afford to pay for your experiments any longer?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Not only is our Green Energy Act building a strong, reliable and clean energy system, it’s creating 50,000 jobs across Ontario and attracting billions of dollars of investment into our green energy economy. Ontarians need to know this, and maybe the member should listen for a second—Ontarians deserve to know this: Tim Hudak wants to kill those jobs and destroy the strong, reliable and clean energy system that Ontarians have worked so hard for.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Oh, it’s Sarah Palin over there.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment, Minister.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. We are only into the second question period of this final session. I realize that things are going to be elevated, but there is important business that needs to be conducted.

I reminded members earlier, I’m going to remind them again and I will remind you all in a statement that I will be delivering tomorrow that it is important that we have debate within this chamber, but debate can take place without personal attacks on one another. I will have more to say about that tomorrow.

New question.

1110

PENSION REFORM

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Over the past few years we have witnessed threats to the retirement security of Ontarians like never before, with mighty corporations taking hits to their viability and pensioners’ security, like Nortel, where there’s still faint hope for reasonable, growth-oriented pension solutions.

Will the Premier tell the Nortel pensioners today that he’s willing to suspend the September 30 Nortel windup process and work towards a financial sponsorship model for stranded pensions?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite knows full well that even if we were able to, we can’t do that. He is referring to an agreement that was signed among a number of participants, including the Nortel pensioners, with respect to the windup of Nortel and with respect to the overall pension account. The member should know full well that it’s governed by the bankruptcy act; it’s been sealed by a court. Regardless of what our views are in these matters, that is not something that is within our purview to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: The Premier knows it’s critical that Ontarians who deferred their wages to their pension plan deserve to have a retirement for which they have planned. Nortel pensioners did their homework, consulted with actuaries, examined the British and Quebec models and have made a sound proposal.

The Premier has the opportunity to take decisive, bold action now to start the growing-up process rather than winding up Ontario’s stranded pension plans. Will he do it? The minister is well aware that this is doable with change in legislation.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The British model failed completely; that needs to be understood.

What the member is advocating is taking hard-earned pension money and putting it into more risky invest-

ments. The member opposite is also ignoring a substantial number of Nortel pensioners who do not want to do that. Those are pensioners who are disabled former employees who have said passionately that they don't want this plan followed.

Our government is proud that we were able to put \$250 million into the Nortel pension benefit guarantee fund through our budget initiatives, which that member and his party did not support. We will continue to work with Nortel pensioners and all Ontarians to build a stronger, better and better-managed pension system for all Ontarians.

ACADEMIC TESTING

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, your office announced the test results of the 2009-10 school year from the EQAO. The results were met with calls to place a moratorium on the large-scale testing that takes place every year. Advocates of a moratorium suggest that the test places a burden on teachers and students, and that the \$100 million dedicated to administering the test and related literacy and numeracy secretariat initiatives would be better spent on other areas in the education system.

Minister, is the money spent to administer EQAO tests money well spent? How will this help Ontario students, specifically those in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham? Do these tests really provide an accurate picture of our education system?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think that it's a very important question. I have the opportunity to clarify why provincial tests are so important and I think that they do provide a very clear snapshot of where all students in the province are with respect to their understanding of the provincial curriculum. It is one measure that we use, and we know that the work done by our classroom teachers always plays a very key role in informing students and families about their progress.

What I can say is how our government has used the results of the tests. Those results have enabled us to drive resources into the classroom. We have increased spending in education by 40% since coming together and we use the results of the test to understand how we can better support teachers in our schools and enable students to be more successful. That's a good investment for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Minister, your ministry released the province-wide test results for elementary and grade 9 students in August. Later this week, I'm looking forward to receiving the results for the York Region District School Board and the York Catholic District School Board because they are usually some of the top in the province.

While this year's provincial results have increased, the release of these results brought a warning from some that the slowing increase in results achieved demonstrates that we are very close to a results plateau. I understand that

the ministry's target of having 75% of students achieving the provincial standard is not likely to be reached.

Minister, what results have we seen this year? Are we indeed facing a plateau in test results? What is this government doing to prevent this?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: What I can say, first of all, is that when we came to government, 54% of our students were achieving the provincial average. Today, the most recent results demonstrate that 68% of students are achieving the provincial average. And it's important to clarify that the provincial average in the province of Ontario is a B; in many other jurisdictions, even other provinces in Canada, it's a C or even a pass. So our kids are doing extraordinarily well, and we will continue to use the test results to inform us how we can continue to support teachers in our schools with the resources that they need to enable school success.

Student achievement is very important to this government, and I think that it's important—I would expect it would be important—to all members of this House to understand how we, with the 40% increase in funding, continue to drive those resources into our front-line classrooms that enable—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Premier. When Dalton McGuinty was caught trying to slip through eco taxes onto 9,000 new products this past summer, he offered a mea culpa. He said, "We came up short." If struggling Ontario families think they've heard that before, it is because they have. After he was caught in the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle, he said, "We should have done more to protect the public."

Since you didn't keep your word during last summer's billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle, why should any Ontarian believe you will keep your promise during this summer's biggest eco fee fiasco?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to start by saying, and I think we tried to establish this yesterday, that we believe it is important that we keep hazardous materials that are in our households from ever getting into our landfills. I am surprised that there would even be a question here about whether or not that is the right policy objective.

Now, how we do that is another issue, and I want to thank the Premier, because he decided that we needed to have a review. At our ministry, we are in the midst of that review, and I look forward to sharing with you in this House the results of that review. We know that consumers want to do the right thing, but what we have to do is make it easy for them. It needs to be accountable. It needs to be transparent. That's why our ministry is doing that review, and I look forward to sharing that with the House. But we are determined to keep hazardous

materials out of our landfills so that they are not discovered by our children and our grandchildren one day.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, it seems that Dalton McGuinty found inspiration in Britney Spears: Oops, he's done it again. When Dalton McGuinty was caught handing out millions of dollars to Liberal-friendly cricket clubs, he said, "I think we can do better." It took an Ombudsman report that said that property assessments in Ontario were hurting Ontario families with significantly higher tax bills, and guess what he said? "We think we can do better." When the disgraceful conditions of nursing homes in this province were exposed in 2008, he said—guess what?—"We think we can do better."

The pattern of mea culpas with this Premier rivals his taxes and his spending. I've got a question for him: Does he really think Ontario families believe a leopard can change its spots?

Hon. John Wilkinson: This party was elected by the good people of Ontario because your party—

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Stop the clock.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, the clock's not stopping. I'm quite content to just let it run. I do apologize to the third party because they have been well behaved, and they are being penalized as a result of actions by both sides of the House.

New question.

1120

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. Est-ce que la ministre pourrait expliquer pourquoi M. Brière, un bon francophone de Nickel Belt, ne peut pas acheter une plaque d'immatriculation personnalisée avec le slogan « Tant à découvrir »? Du côté anglophone, c'est non seulement possible, mais il existe 74 graphiques différents qui vont des arts à l'environnement, passant par les sports et les universités. Mais en français on a notre drapeau. C'est tout, point final; il n'y en a pas d'autres.

Ma question est simple : pourquoi M. Brière n'a-t-il pas les mêmes choix?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: J'apprécie beaucoup la question que vous posez. En fait, les plaques devraient être disponibles partout en Ontario, et je vais m'assurer, avec la ministre responsable du transport, que ce point soit corrigé. Ce n'est pas la première fois qu'on me pose cette question-là, et on a été capable de régler les problèmes ailleurs. J'espère que tous les francophones qui voudront avoir une plaque avec « Tant à découvrir » pourront acheter leur plaque près de chez eux.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: On dirait que le gouvernement pense qu'il n'y a pas de vétérans francophones en Ontario, qu'il n'y a pas de fans des Sénateurs en Ontario, puis qu'il n'y a pas de pompiers francophones en Ontario non plus. Mais laissez-moi vous éclairer : il y en a. Il y a

des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes dans tous ces groupes-là. Ce que nous n'avons pas, c'est un gouvernement qui les respecte et qui leur donne des choix. Les néo-démocrates pensent que la Loi sur les services en français est quelque chose d'important, mais on entend toujours la même chose.

Pourquoi, avec les libéraux de M. McGuinty, les francophones n'ont-ils jamais les mêmes droits? Il faut toujours revendiquer ce qui devrait être notre dû.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je ne peux pas entendre et accepter une question de la sorte, parce que s'il y a un gouvernement qui a supporté les francophones en Ontario, c'est bien le gouvernement de Dalton McGuinty.

Avec la nomination du commissaire aux services en français, avec l'expansion de l'Hôpital Montfort, avec toutes nos écoles francophones qu'on ouvre à chaque année dans tout l'Ontario, je pense que c'est un gouvernement qui ne fait pas juste le dire, mais qui met en action l'appui qu'il a pour les francophones.

Tout récemment on a voté en faveur d'une loi sur la journée des francophones en Ontario, et on va célébrer, le 25 septembre prochain, la journée des francophones. Alors, je voudrais demander aux Ontariens de réfléchir à ce que les néo-démocrates, quand ils étaient au pouvoir, ont fait pour les francophones.

HYDRO ONE

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Energy. On July 5, many people in the city of Toronto lost power due to a fire at Hydro One's Manby transformer station. The outage lasted a couple of hours. People's daily routines were disrupted. It was an especially frightening couple of hours for many stuck in elevators or at home without air conditioning on one of the hottest days in the summer.

Torontonians remembered the panic and the anxiety that set in on August 14, 2003, when power failed in this city and across most of the province. Given the hot summer that we've just had, the lights going out reminded us of that summer seven years ago when they went out and did not come back for days.

Minister, what happened at Manby? Is the problem fixed? Torontonians want to know.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I just want to assure the member that Hydro One is pursuing a full investigation into the incident at the Manby station and will make their findings known. Hydro One has indicated that this was an unusual occurrence caused by the failure of a circuit breaker.

I think Ontarians need to be aware that according to Hydro One, the important investments that the McGuinty government has made over the last six years in our energy infrastructure—investments that are not supported by the opposition, obviously—played an important role in three ways. Number one, they were critical in identifying the initial outage immediately; number two, they were critical in containing the extent of the outage;

and number three, they were critical in helping to get the lights back on in a timely way.

The outage in Toronto this summer stands as a shining example of how important the investments we are making are in building a strong, more reliable energy system.

I dare say, had we taken the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, that outage would probably have resembled the one we saw back in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Minister, fires at transformer stations are pretty serious occurrences, not just because of the dangers to the workers at the station but because shutdowns at stations like Manby place a higher strain on the rest of the grid.

This kind of emergency load shifting can be a pretty tricky process if there's not enough flexibility and redundancy built into the system. If the system is not equipped to handle accidents like this one, we could quickly be looking at a chain reaction of outages throughout the grid in Ontario.

Minister, what are we doing to ensure reliability in our electricity system, especially in the future?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'd like to first commend the Toronto firefighters who fought this fire for their, as usual, heroic and effective work. I'd also like to thank Hydro One staff for their quick response to the outage.

To the member's point: This enhanced reliability in our energy system is a direct result of the investments the McGuinty government has made. Our investments in new generation, transmission and our energy infrastructure were all critical factors in ensuring that this outage did not result in a chain reaction that could have catapulted across the province.

Ontarians need to know that had we taken the opposition's advice, or had a similar outage occurred seven years ago when the Leader of the Opposition was in cabinet, Toronto could have been shut down for days.

Replacing the Tories' weak, unreliable and dirty energy system has not been easy. It has required investment, and that's what triggered the rising cost of electricity. But Ontarians demand and deserve a strong, reliable and clean energy system and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

POWER PLANT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Minister of Energy, who likes to rewrite history.

Oakville residents have called on you to change the location of the proposed Oakville power plant. Your ministry recognizes the Clarkson-Oakville airshed is overtaxed and is incapable of accepting additional pollutant loadings. This summer, Dr. David Balsillie's action plan, which your government commissioned, echoed this concern.

I have listened to the people of Oakville, and I agree with them. Will you listen to the people of Oakville,

change your mind and move the location of this power plant?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We absolutely have been listening to the people of Oakville. We've always been listening to the people of Oakville. We have a member of provincial Parliament in this Legislature by the name of Kevin Flynn who would have it no other way. Kevin Flynn has been working relentlessly in his community on a number of different issues. He has ensured that the voice of his community is being heard—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Lanark and the member from Nepean will please come to order.

Please continue.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Kevin Flynn has ensured that the voice of the people of Oakville has been heard on this and many other issues.

We will continue to talk to the people of Oakville, to work with the people of Oakville. We have some challenges in this particular part of the greater Toronto area. We're going to do everything we can to meet those challenges.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Perhaps the minister will do what he can to see that that bill comes forward from the member from Oakville to third reading.

Minister, toxic pollutants are discharged into the air by gas-fired power plants. Children are particularly susceptible. Already in Halton, respiratory diseases are the number one reason children are admitted to our hospitals. Yet this power plant will be in an overtaxed airshed within two kilometres of approximately 16 schools and 5,000 homes.

Nanticoke is a willing host. They want this power plant. Halton's airshed cannot handle it. You have the facts from Dr. Balsillie and a viable alternative. Again, will you move that power plant?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Only an outdated, right-wing Tory party is going to be against cleaner sources of energy. Only a right-wing Tory party is going to be against our efforts to get out of coal by the year 2014.

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We are going to do everything we can to work with the people of Oakville and the people right across this province to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe-Grey, the member from Lanark and the member from Nepean-Carleton will please come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Halton as well.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're going to do everything we can, working with people right across this province, to ensure that we build a strong, reliable and clean energy system in this province. One thing we won't do is do what they want us to do, and that's to go back to the past.

That's to go back to the weak system, the unreliable system, the dirty system that polluted our air and impacted the health of ourselves and our kids and our grandkids.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Two years ago, I wrote to the Ombudsman, asking him to investigate the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN and its failure to represent the interests of its community. A scathing report was delivered by the Ombudsman just last month, and it pointed to a number of things, including illegal meetings and a community decision-making process that was nothing more than a sham.

My question is a simple one: How could this LHIN have strayed so far off course, and what does it say for the rest of the LHINs across this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We were pleased to receive the report from the Ombudsman. As my honourable colleague knows, the LHINs are a relatively recent creation in the history of Ontario health care. I know that my honourable colleague does, in fact, support local decision-making. I know that she supports moving away from the seven regional health offices and the 16 district health councils that used to be there instead. And I know that she really embraces this concept of giving communities greater say in terms of establishing their own priorities when it comes to meeting their health care needs.

As I say, we accept the recommendations offered by the Ombudsman, and I can also assure my colleague that we have followed each and every one of those.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Rather than denial, deflection and excuses, will the Premier admit to Ontarians, like the ones living in Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand and Brant, that his out-of-control LHINs need to be reined in and that the wrong-headed decisions, like the closing of emergency rooms, that were made by that LHIN need to be reversed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I have a continuing and abiding faith in the ability of communities to establish their priorities when it comes to their health care.

The alternative being proposed by some—I'm not clear as to where the leader of the NDP is coming from on this score—is that we eliminate the LHINs and restore seven regional health offices and 16 district health councils. That's not a concept that we support. We are very much supportive of this idea of giving local communities local influence into their locally delivered health care.

There are some challenges that will be encountered along the way. As those become apparent, we will continue to find ways to address them so that we can continue to find ways—all of us working together—to deliver the very best possible health care to all our families, regardless of where they live.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, constituents often contact my office regarding the status of employment standards claims that they have filed with your ministry. I know that Bill 68 amendments are intended to encourage faster resolution of claims. However, a related concern has been brought to my attention.

The proposed amendments to the Employment Standards Act would make it mandatory for workers to contact their employers before filing claims with your ministry. My constituents are concerned that this will make it harder for employees to stand up for their employment standards rights. In particular, younger workers and workers who struggle to speak English find this requirement intimidating.

Minister, why is your ministry proposing this change, and what are you doing to address this particular concern?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member for Guelph for her question and for being such a tireless champion for her constituents' rights.

We've made great strides on this side of the House, on this side of the floor, to help vulnerable workers, to protect vulnerable workers, and we're going to continue to do just that.

Bill 68, if passed, encourages employees to contact their employer first, as a first step, before filing an employment standards claim. We know from experience that providing early notification encourages an early resolution. This means getting money back into the pockets of hard-working Ontarians faster, and this is what we are going to do. Although we do know that some employees have barriers, we are providing information to those employees in over 20 different languages. Also, if an employee feels threatened or uncomfortable, they can go directly to contact our employment standards office for help.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you, Minister, because that clarification is important for my constituents, particularly those who are vulnerable.

But many of those who need help the most are often not even aware of their rights as employees. Many of my constituents are newcomers to Ontario, and English is sometimes not their native language. I appreciate the information that you've given us, but what is the ministry doing to get the word out to the public at large and particularly to those vulnerable workers who don't always understand their rights or the legislation?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, I want to thank the member for the question. I'm glad to hear that vulnerable workers are on everyone's minds here in this Legislature.

We want to assure the member that my ministry recognizes the challenge around employment standards claims that vulnerable workers who don't speak English or French as their first language may have. That's why we're providing fact sheets and information sheets in 23

different languages. They're available on the ministry's website. We've been working with employers, employee advocacy groups and other ministries to deliver this information directly to new and vulnerable workers. We do this through our website, through brochures and through posters. We're making sure that people get the information they need so that they are aware of their rights.

This government is moving forward with a plan. It's a positive plan. Bill 68—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Wendy and Marc Trottier of Brights Grove have accepted the responsibility of providing daily support for their daughter Amber for the past 26 years. Amber needs 24-hour care. She spends most of her day in a wheelchair and is prone to seizures. They're worried about where Amber will live when they can no longer afford to take care of her.

Some 110 people are currently on a wait list for residential services in my riding through Lambton County Developmental Services. Minister, when can families like the Trottiers expect action on this important issue?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me say thank you to this family, la famille Trottier, for all the work that they're doing in developmental disabilities. We need these parents who are so involved to lobby and to be the advocates for their sons and daughters, and I really do appreciate that.

I have to say that I'm very proud of the investment of this government in developmental disabilities. We have opened more beds in the developmental disability sector than any government before, and we will continue to do so. Every year, there are more requests for services, either to go into care or to have some respite, and that's what—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary? The member from Dufferin—Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, there's no doubt of the dedication of the Trottier family. There is doubt, however, about the dedication of your ministry in actually supporting these families. The Trottiers are tired of empty promises from your government. When can they expect action from you to decrease the wait list in developmental services?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Every year, this government invests in different services for the developmental disabilities sector. We have invested—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There are a number of—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Stop the clock.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Thanks, Speaker from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

There are a number of cross-conversations taking place here and it's always healthy, but when they elevate to a level that makes it difficult to hear, it's a challenge for everyone. I would just encourage the members that if they want to have a cross-conversation, that's what the chambers on either side of the lobby are for.

Minister.

1140

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Since taking office we have committed over \$176 million in funding to help adults with developmental disabilities live in the community, creating service and supports for more than 2,700 people. Also, this government has created the Passport program, which helps parents with their sons and daughters with developmental disabilities. Every year we're adding to that envelope and we will continue to do so.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, I raise this issue on behalf of a constituent in Smooth Rock Falls, Angele Lacroix, whose family has been devastated since the closure of the Tembec mill in Smooth Rock Falls. She writes the following:

"I'm presently enrolled in a two-year registered practical nurse course through Ontario's Second Career program. I hope to convince you that the Second Career program's new guidelines are restrictive and do not allow enough flexibility in assessing and meeting the specific financial needs of candidates like myself in special circumstances. The new guidelines have created added financial hardship on me and others, thereby, in my opinion, the program will fall short of its objectives to help train unemployed workers for new careers.

"Although I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in the program, unless I am provided with adequate financial assistance, I will be unable to finish my two-year program."

Premier, what is your government prepared to do to make sure she's able to stay in the program and complete it, and go to a job that she has been promised?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: I appreciate the honourable member's question. Obviously I can't comment on a specific case but I'd be happy, if he provides me with the information, to look into it.

But let me take this opportunity to talk about the Second Career program. A report to this Legislature said that as of, I believe, a week ago Friday we have close to 35,000 Ontarians who have benefited from the Second Career program.

Despite the continuing criticism that came from the New Democratic Party, we moved forward and established the first program of its kind in Canada. We have worked to make sure that it's responsive to the needs of

workers. Last June, in fact, we issued new directives to make the guidelines more flexible based on the feedback that we had heard from both those who were applying to Second Career and from those who are administering the program. Changes to the program in June of last year in turn changed eligibility and brought forward things like a reduction in the number of weeks of active job search that a candidate needed. We reduced the duration of unemployment by half—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, it just doesn't cut it. Angele is going to be forced not to complete this program because your Second Career program does not provide her with the support that she needs to be able to complete it. My office, my constituency staff and myself have already raised this issue with your ministry and the MPP liaison on numerous occasions in order to intervene. That's the reason I asked the Premier to intervene, because your office has said, "There's nothing we can do."

So my question to you is simply this: Angele wants to stay in school. She has been offered a full-time job at the end of her training. Are you, yes or no, going to fix the issue so that she gets the support that she needs to be able to continue on with her education and move to a full-time job?

Hon. John Milloy: I make no apologies for a program which has offered support to 35,000 Ontarians, and as I've travelled throughout the province I have met dozens and dozens of people who are part of this program and moving forward. The program has a financial criteria which is based on the individual needs of an applicant and can offer up to \$28,000 in support. As I say, I cannot stand here and comment on an individual case or that person's financial circumstances. But what I can say is that we have 35,000 Ontarians who are turning over a new chapter in their life despite the fact that that party stood up day after day and criticized the program, asked us to scrap the program and said the program was a flop.

Interjections.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Now you're quiet, and I think it goes in very nicely with some of the comments I'm just about to make.

I have to admit—and I'm sure some of our guests who were here today were not overly pleased with the level of decorum that existed within this hallowed chamber today. I want to remind all members that the use of first names and personal attacks were extremely rampant, I'd almost say to the point where the viewers at home and I'm sure sitting in the galleries today probably wondered if they were watching a rerun of the Friday Night Fights.

This is a Parliament. It is a unique workplace, and we've had this discussion before. There is important work that needs to be conducted here. Our guests, viewers and every member within this chamber have the right

to expect that each of us, as elected representatives, treat each other with respect. I can say to each member that I would encourage you to be here tomorrow or make sure that your staff get the Hansard because I will have more to say about this tomorrow.

In the meantime, I'd urge all of you to reflect on today's performance within this chamber and consider an improved tone for tomorrow.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1146 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROSH HASHANAH

Mr. Peter Shurman: I am honoured to rise today on behalf of the Jewish constituents of my riding of Thornhill who are celebrating Rosh Hashanah. Last Thursday, September 9, marked the first day of Rosh Hashanah or, translated, the head of the year, otherwise known as the Jewish New Year.

Rosh Hashanah is the first of the High Holy Days, which are days specifically set aside to focus on repentance and planning for the new year ahead. The High Holy Days end with Yom Kippur, which takes place this Saturday.

Unlike secular New Year's celebrations, Rosh Hashanah is a very serious holiday where religious observances come first. Many of my constituents have been celebrating the holiday with family and friends in synagogue, including myself and my wife Carole.

Some of the Rosh Hashanah observances include the sounding of the shofar, the ram's horn, which represents the trumpet blast of a people's coronation of their king; eating a piece of apple dipped in honey to symbolize our desire for a sweet year; and other special foods symbolic of the new year's blessings. We bless one another with the words *L'Shana Tova Tikatevu*: May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year.

I wish the people of Thornhill and Jewish Ontarians everywhere *Shana Tova*, a good year.

RAMADAN

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I'd like to begin, first of all, by honouring the spirit of diversity that governs this House and the government here. Of course, it's in that spirit that I rise today on behalf of all members of the Legislature to recognize one of the great Islamic celebrations and to extend to the Muslim community of Ontario—some 500,000 people strong—felicitations at the end of Ramadan, the holy month of the fast, and the celebration of Eid.

This is a time of celebration, charity, forgiveness and coming together as family, and, of course, it's a time to give thanks for being granted the strength and discipline

to have endured the past month of fasting. I know that my own children, Shamsa and Shafiq Jr. have thoroughly enjoyed this wonderful occasion to dress up, share their cultural knowledge, and overeat and celebrate.

Of course, at this particular festive time, we also remain mindful of a number of tragedies that are taking place across the globe, including the extraordinary flood and disaster unfolding in Pakistan. I'd like to salute not only the government of Ontario but also the federal government for the very generous contributions that they've made, both materially, in resources, and in finances. I'd like to thank, on behalf of all members of the Legislature and the country of Pakistan, Ontarians and Canadians for their extraordinary generosity at this time.

We move together to build a stronger community and to celebrate the global family. With that, I would conclude once again by saying a Happy Eid to all. Eid Mubarak.

VILLAGE OF SEELEYS BAY

Mr. Steve Clark: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak about the community of Seeleys Bay.

As I speak, a determined campaign is under way to have this village on the Rideau waterway crowned as the ultimate fishing town in Canada. Thanks to the hard work of people like Liz Huff, harbourmaster Christine Coulter and 12-year-old Shane White, Seeleys Bay has made the list of 10 finalists in the World Fishing Network's online contest. It's a credit to the spirit of Seeleys Bay that they have made the list by beating out several large cities, despite having just 550 households.

Anyone who has ever wet a line in the many lakes, rivers and streams around the township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands already knows Seeleys Bay is an angler's paradise. Bass, pike and perch are but a few of the many species of fish that can be found in those pristine waters.

This is their chance to really land the big one by putting the village on the international stage and winning a \$25,000 prize to help fund community improvements. The winning community will also be the subject of a 30-minute feature on the World Fishing Network. This North American exposure is sure to bring much-needed tourism dollars into the Leeds-Grenville area.

I urge everyone to do as I've been doing and help Seeleys Bay claim the title by voting early and often online at www.wfn.tv before September 28.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Reza Moridi: It is my pleasure to bring great news about the positive impact that our provincial infrastructure funds are having on our municipalities.

A \$2.25-million grant under the province's municipal infrastructure investment initiative was given for the

Pioneer Park stormwater management rehabilitation project in Richmond Hill. The existing stormwater facility was built in 1985 but was no longer meeting the standards for which it was designed. As a result, key infrastructure was at risk, including Major Mackenzie Drive, which is an important dispatch route for York Central Hospital as well as for our fire and police stations. Overall, this is a \$6.3-million multidisciplinary project to rehabilitate the existing flood control facility in order to provide protection to vulnerable areas, protect existing infrastructure, enhance erosion control, treat water quality and stabilize and rehabilitate the East Don River watercourse.

The good news continues: I am pleased to announce that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, FCM, has awarded its first annual Watershed Award to the town of Richmond Hill for this project. The FCM award, in its introductory year, recognizes municipalities which have demonstrated leadership in their efforts to adapt to climate change by reducing their vulnerability to flooding and water damage.

This is an excellent example of our provincial investment dollars making a direct impact on municipalities.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Ted Arnott: Last Friday, I was privileged to attend an impressive event along with our town of Halton Hills firefighters and Halton region's emergency medical services personnel. We are greatly indebted to these fine and courageous individuals who demonstrate professionalism and skill in all that they do to keep our communities safe.

Now our firefighters and EMS staff have new facilities to train and prepare to respond to emergencies: a new fire headquarters on 10th Sideroad and a new fire EMS station on Maple Avenue in Georgetown. These impressive new buildings are now officially open, and I want to publicly thank the government of Ontario for its \$1.9 million in funding, which contributed substantially towards the total \$9.4-million project cost.

In the 20 years that I've been privileged to serve in the Ontario Legislature as a member of provincial Parliament, I have gone to bat for our volunteer fire service many times, most recently to push hard for fairness across the entire fire service when it comes to presumptive workers' compensation coverage. These are concerns I care passionately about because of the respect and affection in which I hold our volunteer firefighters for all that they do. I want to express my sincere thanks to the Firefighters Association of Ontario for making me an honorary member of the fire service a few months ago in recognition of the public issues we've worked on together.

Looking to the future, we will continue to support our volunteer firefighters as a means of beginning to repay the debt of gratitude we owe to them, which can never be fully discharged. Thank you.

1510

TRANSIT FUNDING

Mr. Michael Prue: This morning I had the privilege of being at the Victoria Park station of the Toronto Transit Commission. I was there because all three levels of government in the past saw fit to put money into the Toronto Transit Commission to upgrade the facilities of the subway system that runs across and up through the heart of Toronto.

The past funding surely worked. But the sad reality is that all the credit that the federal Conservatives who were there today and the provincial Liberals who were there today gave themselves will not be there tomorrow. The federal program will be discontinued if you are to believe Mr. Flaherty, and I have no reason to doubt him. The McGuinty government has postponed \$4 billion to Transit City. This has caused a great deal of anger and confusion amongst the mayor and city council, and they are justifiably angry.

It will be a long time, I suggest, before we see the kinds of upgrades to the system that I saw today at Victoria Park station. I think the people of Toronto need and expect the government to start taking the kinds of actions it promised. Postponing the \$4 billion was not the right thing to do. Building what was built today at Victoria Park station is what should be happening across this entire city so that people have the kind of access they need, the kind of access that they absolutely have to have in order to get them out of their cars into the transit system and to make the city move again.

MISSISSAUGA-STREETSVILLE BARBECUE

Mr. Bob Delaney: This August, about 2,500 people from western Mississauga gathered near Lake Aquitaine in Meadowvale to enjoy some good food and entertainment at the Mississauga–Streetsville annual barbecue. Co-hosted with my federal counterpart, MP Bonnie Crombie, our community gathered on the first weekend of August to enjoy some food with their neighbours and to be entertained by some of the finest performers in Mississauga.

Attendees applauded performances from the Culture Philippines of Ontario dancers, Astra's Belly Dancing Troupe, the Butler-Fearon-O'Connor School of Irish Dance, Habeeba's Belly Dancing Troupe, Chinese dragon dances and the Canadian Dance Company, as well as a wonderful performance by vocalist Rachel Bawn.

Special thanks to our community volunteers who helped out serving food, cutting watermelons and ensuring that all who attended had an enjoyable afternoon at our Meadowvale neighbourhood get-together.

Residents visited booths from local community groups such as the Eden Food Bank, St. John Ambulance, the Sierra Club of Peel and the Mississauga St. Michael's

Majors hockey club. As the local MPP, I was delighted to speak with so many residents and their families and to meet the community partners that make western Mississauga the best place to work, live, play and raise a family.

JIM DEVLIN

Mr. Jeff Leal: I rise today to talk about a man whose life is much like a Hollywood story. Over 50 years ago, as a young man, Jim Devlin went looking for a job and was hired to clean buses for Trentway-Wagar bus company in Peterborough. Jim worked hard for Trentway-Wagar all his life. He went from an employee to owner of this company, a company that made Jim very successful. Over the years, Trentway-Wagar transformed into Coach Canada Lines Ltd., one of Canada's largest bus companies, a company that employed 1,000 employees and a company that Jim Devlin was president of for 34 years.

He then sold Canada Coach to Stagecoach but stayed on as president to run the local operation. Jim Devlin not only was a successful businessman in Peterborough, but he also gave back to his community and currently sits on the Peterborough Petes hockey club's board of directors. In an article that recently appeared in our newspaper about Jim Devlin's amazing career, he was quoted as saying, "The most important aspect of my career has been the people I've had the pleasure to work with. I know that on September 1st, when I head into an unknown lifestyle for me (winding down), it will be the people that I worked with that I will miss most." Jim never forgot his roots and always recognized and appreciated the values of those he worked with.

Mr. Speaker, Jim Devlin is an example for others to follow. I wish him, his wife Joanne and family all the best in his retirement. It is very well deserved.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Kuldip Kular: I rise in the Legislature this afternoon to share the news that full-day kindergarten has arrived to seven schools in Bramalea–Gore–Malton as of this year. This exciting program will greatly benefit my constituents, from the youngest of them to working parents. It will help build a stronger foundation for future learning so that our children can achieve more in school, go on to post-secondary education, find great jobs and build a stronger economic future for all Ontarians.

Before- and after-school programs will create a safe, stimulating environment for our children to develop the emotional, social and academic skills they need to succeed in life and help parents access the affordable daycare they need to balance commitments to their family and work.

Full-day kindergarten means a brighter future for our students and for all Ontarians, and I'm grateful that it has been introduced in Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated September 14, 2010, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition that came to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. They keep coming in, and I know this may be something that happened a while ago, but people are still upset about it. It says:

"Whereas the residents of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships ... and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

This is signed by people all over my riding.

RECYCLING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to read this petition sent to me by a group of grade 7 students at Lisgar Middle School whom I visited on a number of occasions. On this occasion, I want to acknowledge Lynn Hutchinson and Rachael Huson for collecting the signatures. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the grade 7H students of Lisgar Middle School believe that the current method of recycling used dry cell batteries and other household hazardous waste materials is not successful. We have attempted to create the easiest and most comprehensive method of recycling batteries and other household hazardous materials.... This

initiative fits directly into the same frame of reference as the blue box recycling and composting programs, which have encouraged individuals and households to recycle as much as they already do. We implore the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to give this proposed initiative of a household red box recycling program your approval into law;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ... would like to support" and enthusiastically encourage "the Recycling Raptors of grade 7H at Lisgar Middle School, in their proposal of a household red box recycling program, and..., to pass into law such a program, as described in the attached letter outlining the red box recycling initiative, as presented."

On their behalf, I'm pleased to sign this petition and to ask page Lina to carry it for me.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to be back here in this important function of reading petitions on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario depend on the convenient, accessible advice and services provided by their community pharmacies; and

"Whereas Ontarians want to ensure their pharmacists are there when they need them; and

"Whereas patients can talk to their pharmacist after work, when they can't get to their doctor's office or when their doctor's office is closed; and

"Whereas Ontarians [want] assurance that their pharmacies will continue to be able to provide valuable health services to their community;

1520

"Therefore we, the undersigned petitioners, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to please not cut services to the neighbourhood health care community pharmacies provide" in Ontario.

I'm pleased to sign and endorse this on behalf of my constituents.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Welcome back to everyone. This is a petition to support extending the Ombudsman of Ontario's jurisdiction to include the Tarion Warranty Corp.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations, etc.;

"Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Tarion Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of

repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Taron Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Taron agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that ... the undersigned support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Taron and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

I certainly agree with this and will affix my signature.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Pat Hoy: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas grandparents often become a family's first reserves in time of crisis. Grandparents act as fun playmates for children, role models, and family historians, mentors, and help establish self-esteem and security for children.

One potential aspect of the divorce is the disruption or severance of the grandparent-grandchild relationship.

Also, in cases of the death of a parent, (the maternal or paternal grandparents' child), should continue to enjoy access to the grandparent by the living parent, as visitation and access was fully established prior to death of parent;

"Due to the increase in life expectancy, most children have living grandparents. Coupled with the fact that 60% of divorced couples have at least one minor child, the potential for severed contact could be quite substantial;

"In Canada, the issue of grandparents' rights of access to grandchildren has not been given recognition in legislation, with the exception of the provinces of Quebec, Alberta and BC. In all other provinces, grandparents may only petition the courts for rights to access as interested third parties. In the absence of a specific statute providing grandparents with legal standing to access, there are continuing difficulties in obtaining contact with grandchildren;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That grandparents have legal rights to access to visitation with their grandchildren in the event of parental divorce or death of a parent."

It's signed by a number of residents from Merlin, Thamesville, and Chatham.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have some more petitions that come from people all over my riding. Here's one. They say they realize this is likely a little too late, but they're sorry. It comes from the Quill Learning Network in Walkerton. The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the residents of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships ... and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I've signed this. As I say, it comes from all over my riding.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients; and

"Whereas" since "October 2009, insured PET scans" are "performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the clerks' table with page Brandon.

RECYCLING

Mr. Jeff Leal: I just have a petition from some good folks in Mississauga, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the grade 7H students at Lisgar Middle School believe that the current method of recycling used

dry cell batteries and other household hazardous waste materials is not successful. We have attempted to create the easiest and most comprehensive method of recycling batteries and other household hazardous materials (as illustrated in their letter, attached). This initiative fits directly in the same frame of reference as the blue box recycling and composting programs, which have encouraged individuals and households to reduce as much as they already do. We implore the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to give this proposed initiative of a household red box recycling program your approval into law;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We, the undersigned, would like to support, enthusiastically, the Recycling Raptors of grade 7H at Lisgar Middle School, in their proposal of a household red box recycling program, and implore the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass into law such a program, as described in the attached letter outlining the red box recycling initiative, as presented."

I'd like to support these enthusiastic students at Lisgar Middle School and will affix my signature to it.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario PC caucus supports public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

"Ontario families have already paid Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which has been wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care in our communities and putting independent rural pharmacies in Bruce and Grey at risk;

"Dalton McGuinty's cuts will:

"—reduce local pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends;

"—increase wait times and lineups for patients;

"—increase out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

"—reduce critical health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to rural pharmacies."

I've signed this. This comes from Ayton, Ontario.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of the city of Greater Sudbury.

"Whereas the strike at Vale Inco's mines, mill and smelter in Sudbury and Port Colborne" lasted for a full year; and

"Whereas this strike caused hardship to the 3,300 workers, their families, the communities and the busi-

nesses and" contributed "to a significant net drain to the economy; and

"Whereas the resumption of production with replacement workers ... produced undue tension in the community; and

"Whereas anti-replacement legislation in other provinces has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of replacement workers...."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the clerk with page Noor.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have another petition that has just come in here, and it's again from all over my riding, from Wiarton, Owen Sound, Sauble Beach and other places around the riding. Again it's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the residents of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I've signed this also.

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TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: In the limited time left here on petitions:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's harmonized sales tax ... will increase the cost of gasoline at the pumps by 8%"—as we already know; and

"Whereas Ontario families are still hoping to recover from the worst recession in recent memory and gasoline remains a necessity for essential travel in business, commerce, employment, education, travel, health care and more; and

"Whereas gasoline is already taxed by the province of Ontario at 14.7 cents per litre and the HST would add an estimated \$1.7 billion windfall from gasoline and diesel fuel alone; and

"Whereas if your family spends \$100 a week on gasoline, this will add \$8 per week, or \$400 per year, to the total cost; and

"Whereas Canada's provinces and territories have the power to regulate gasoline prices;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario legislature to ease the burden of the HST by reducing the existing provincial gas tax by an amount equal to Ontario's share of the HST on gasoline and diesel."

I sign and support this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WATER OPPORTUNITIES AND WATER CONSERVATION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DES TECHNOLOGIES DE L'EAU ET LA CONSERVATION DE L'EAU

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 13, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 72, An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts in respect of water conservation and other matters / Projet de loi 72, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur le développement des technologies de l'eau et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'eau et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm quite surprised—it's the government's turn to speak on this bill and they are not taking the time to address this most important issue of water and water safety. It's another example of a government that has a lack of courage to stand up and defend the incremental, creeping costs of services that the people of Ontario demand, need and expect. Someone should be standing up and speaking openly. I'm sure there's a degree of concern. No bill is perfect. I can say from the beginning, our critic yesterday, Mr. Barrett, spoke at some length and outlined some of the concerns. Our primary position, to start with, is that we are very supportive of safe, clean, accessible drinking water in the province of Ontario.

We also want to listen to the people of Ontario instead of having what some would say is a secret agenda to manoeuvre or socially manipulate the people of Ontario. This is what is most important about my remarks here today: that I am responding, not with my own direct concerns but the concerns that have been raised during the Environmental Bill of Rights posting of this legislation.

This legislation, Bill 72, was introduced in May 2010, just prior to the summer recess. Then it was posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights for a period of time—a period of time when most Ontarians would not be paying as close attention to things such as this particular posting

on the Environmental Bill of Rights. On top of that, I can also say that I have contacted the lower-tier and upper-tier municipalities in my riding of Durham.

This same minister, Minister Gerretsen—who is no longer there, which might be some indication of the manoeuvring that's going on—tried at the same time, during the summer and in the shadows of night, to bring in the eco tax. He was quickly and roundly chastised by the public and the media for trying to slip it through—I was going to use the word "sneak," but that's been ruled unacceptable, so I'll just say "slip it through" when no one was paying attention. I put to you, Madam Speaker, that the same motive exists in Bill 72: trying to have a manoeuvring ability on such an important issue as safe, clean drinking water in the province of Ontario.

On this bill, on a first look, we would say our position is, we clearly support clean water and the promotion of clean-water technology. In my remarks, you'll see how, in the past—in 2002—certain bills were passed when we were in government that demonstrate that very clearly.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The House leader for the Liberals is squawking over there, and what she says is absolutely, patently false. She should stand and withdraw because she hasn't got the foggiest idea what she's talking about. There was a commission that ruled—if you want to participate, stand in your place and participate; otherwise—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd just remind the member to speak to the bill, not individuals.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: Our position, as I was trying to outline, is that we would be taking all actions that promote and sustain. This bill clearly has a hidden price tag, and they refuse to admit it. And the fact that they are not standing and addressing the bill, and trying to shut down the debate, is one more example.

The bill sets up yet another Liberal bureaucracy, not unlike eHealth, not unlike the OLG and some of the other failed bureaucracies. I can only say that our former government committed to enacting all of the recommendations of the O'Connor report and, also, we were committed to embracing the excellence centre on water at Walkerton.

The problem here is when the problem occurred at Walkerton—I want to put this on the record here—there were two people, the Koebel brothers, who falsified records, and to falsify them, they had to know what the standard was. Now here's the issue: To do that means they were misinterpreting the data or at least wrongfully reporting the data to OCWA, the Ontario Clean Water Agency, which, by the way, was created by the NDP government.

I can only say that the bill has five particular schedules in it, some of which I would have no problem agreeing with, but when you look around, what are the municipi-

palities saying about this bill? For the rest of the time here I'm going to read, with your indulgence, Madam Speaker, a report. This was issued by the regional municipality of Durham, and I want to thank them for the work they provided during the summer, when everyone was obviously on vacation. I want to thank the commissioner of finance, Jim Clapp, and the commissioner of works, Cliff Curtis, who issued a report on June 15, during the last few weeks of council's meetings, which is one of the things—councils didn't even get a chance to actually debate these things.

The background is, "The strategy will promote new business and ... commercialization of water and waste water technologies." Nobody has a problem with that—trying to do things better. We can all do better. But to presume that you have it right—we're seeing it now. They also ascribe here, in section 2.3, "recent provincial initiatives that included elements that are covered in the ... bill." This is very much a copy of what's happening under the time-of-use meters, these so-called smart meters, that you're seeing in your home.

This is just a prelude to them actually taxing well water, which happened a long time ago—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes. Put it in the record books.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Taxing private water.

Mr. John O'Toole: Taxing water: That's exactly what this bill does.

It says, "Recent provincial discussion papers seeking out input from the Great Lakes strategy and the Stewardship/Leadership/Accountability" conference in the summer of 2009.

It goes on to say there are other protections in the Lake Simcoe Protection Act and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act. These were acts that were implemented when we were in government.

The summary of the bill I would encourage all members to read.

In the very limited time that I have left I'm going to talk about some of the concerns raised by the report that I'm referring to. It is report 2010-J-33, issued June 15 by the region of Durham.

"The bill requires municipalities and water utilities to prepare, approve and submit to the Minister of the Environment sustainability plans for municipal water, waste water and storm water services under their jurisdiction. The content of the plans is to include:

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"—an asset management plan;

"—a financial plan;

"—a water conservation plan for the community and municipal operations;

"—strategies for maintaining and improving the service;

"—a risk assessment plan which identifies factors that may interfere with future delivery."

That's all gobbledygook for downloading responsibilities to the municipality.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Downloading? Ha!

Mr. John O'Toole: Exactly what they're doing. Mr. Rinaldi says they're downloading. Well, what have you uploaded? What have you uploaded? Nothing.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: You've taken all the OMPF money off the municipalities. You took all the OMPF money up, Rick, Mr. Bartolucci from Sudbury.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no, if you want to intervene, you'd better tell the whole story. They are the party—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask you to make your remarks through the Chair.

Mr. John O'Toole: Very good. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The other side is intervening, yet they did not take the opportunity to stand and speak to this bill. That's what's so discouraging here. They are not willing to participate in the debates on legislation that they are proposing, which, I put to you, is very, very intrusive.

The report I'm referring to here says:

"—set performance indicators and targets for these plans (related to finance, operations and maintenance);

"—require periodic progress reports"—more work for the lower-tier or upper-tier municipality.

"Part IV of the bill proposes that through regulations, public agencies including municipalities ... will be required to:

"—prepare water conservation plans;

"—achieve conservation targets...;

"—promote and consider water efficiency and ... procurement processes" for the goods.

But it goes on. What gets more troubling, Durham's comments on the bill are specific to this: "Providing sustainability plans to the minister circumvents the autonomy of council." In other words, it actually cancels the autonomy of council in Durham region, which automatically runs the water and water treatment plants already.

"Although staff recognize the merit in requiring an asset management plan as part of the sustainability plan for water and sewer systems, there are numerous concerns with the sustainability plan requirement as follows:

"It does not acknowledge that long-term financial planning is an integral part of Durham region's business plan process. Regional council approves three annual financial planning studies related to water and sewer." Those plans are already in process and required. This is duplication, another example of how with this government, it costs more to do less.

Also, "future capital and operating costs and sources of funding (upfront funding, development charges, user rates) to ensure the long-term financial viability of the systems," that's already in place under the Development Charges Act. All capital has to be apportioned over the future number of years to accommodate the growth.

"It does not address the issue that municipalities should be implementing a 100% user pay system with full metering (elimination of flat rates)." Cities like Toronto are still flat-rating, which does not encourage

any sort of conservation. "Durham region is already fully metered and no funding from property taxes is used to finance the water and sewer systems. This is necessary to ensure residents pay the true cost of water and sewer services and is vital to water conservation."

"It does not address"—this is this Bill 72—"the issue that some smaller systems should amalgamate to create larger water service areas to benefit from economies of scale" and sharing technology and expertise.

"Regulation 453/07 under the Safe Drinking Water Act already requires municipalities to prepare financial plans for drinking water systems. Additional demands for plans and reporting will add costs and effort"—and time—"to already considerable bureaucracy and reporting related to water.

"The requirement for municipal plans to be approved by every municipality serviced could cause delay and duplication in a two tier system. Where a joint plan exists this makes sense, but not for an upper-tier system that delivers both water and sewer.... Will an upper-tier approval be necessary for a lower-tier sustainability plan?

"4.3 The introduction of targets or performance indicators by the minister could be problematic"—and this is the Durham region officials, not some politician—"in part because municipalities have very different systems and physical characteristics. For example, Durham has 14 water supply systems, including lake-based and groundwater systems over a large geographical area. This differs greatly from areas like Toronto," Peel or the other regions "with fewer systems required over a smaller geographical area with more" densely populated areas. "Durham region already establishes benchmarks as part of the annual budget process. Different targets or benchmarks would be required to accommodate the various systems throughout Ontario." This is more bureaucracy, more cost and less accountability, in my view.

"4.4 Decision-making with respect to municipal water and sewer systems should remain with regional council. Regional council should decide on the necessary capital program to accommodate future development, necessary rate increases and rate structure. Various rate structures are used throughout Ontario to recover costs (i.e. increasing block rate, declining block rate and single block rate etc.). The region is concerned that the future regulation will provide authority to the minister to alter or restrict a region's rate structure or rate increase." This is more duplication and more bureaucracy. That's what this bill really is.

"4.5 The concern about municipal autonomy has also been raised"—very similar to Bill 150, the Green Energy Act. They expunged all municipal authority in that bill, and this bill is a copy of that. It's a template for how the Liberals do business—"as a result of a private member's bill" which was created by their own prior minister, David Caplan, "(Bill 13) which also relates to water and sewer systems. If passed, this bill would establish the Ontario Water Board as a crown agency to regulate municipal water" and watershed systems, therefore

expunging any authority that the municipality has today by law. "This action basically creates another level of approval which is not required." This is the region of Durham.

"Ontario Clean Water Agency (OCWA)

"4.6 Proposed changes to OCWA would expand its authority to 'assist' municipalities in providing water and sewer services. The proposed legislation defines that assistance to include 'financing, planning, developing, building and operating.' These activities are already successfully undertaken by the region of Durham through approval by regional council. Staff understands that there are areas in Ontario which may benefit from the expertise of OCWA and the efficiencies of shared resources but the larger regions possess the expertise and economies of scale required to efficiently manage their systems." There's no problem with standards. There's a problem with duplication and bureaucracy here.

"Conservation efforts"—this is very important.

"4.8 The bill proposes that a conservation plan"—much like Bill 150. I understand clearly that about 50% of all water that's processed is wasted. Running the tap while you're brushing your teeth or whatever else, it's not properly used. That's a report I could share with the House if they wish—"would be required as part of the municipality's sustainable plan and a separate water conservation plan is required by public agencies including municipalities (for water usage at municipally-owned facilities).

"4.9 Water use is already trending downward in Durham" region to accommodate efforts both at the residential and non-residential levels. They're actually doing their homework. Many areas are not. The province should deal with the areas that are not in conformance instead of taking the one-size-fits-all McGuinty approach. "During 2003-08, residential consumption per customer decreased by approximately 14%."

We know in Ontario, for instance, that our water usage is around 260 litres per person per day. In Europe and other jurisdictions, it's about 150 litres per person per day. So yes, we have work to do. We would agree with that. But the way you're going about it is like all things. Specifically, the smart meter is another example of what you're doing to the electricity bill. We heard today in question period that this is increasing the cost and burden for people who are consuming essential commodities like electricity and water.

The graph that I have here from the region illustrates the drop in annual residential water usage per customer, and it is a considerable improvement: 14%.

"4.10 There are a number of factors that could have contributed to the steady decline in per customer" usage of water:

"The 1996 Ontario building code revisions which required the installation of six-litre toilets in new construction. From 1985 to 1995, 13-litre toilets were approved for new construction" back 20 years ago. They are no longer acceptable. That's something a municipality can require and does in Durham region.

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"Existing residents have replaced inefficient appliances (toilets and washing machines) with more efficient fixtures."

"Durham Region's water efficiency program, known as Water Efficient Durham, was launched in 1996 to implement the regional water use efficiency strategy," with great success.

I can only go on to say that this report is worth reading, but it also cautions us that this is actually another example of Premier McGuinty trying to imply that many regions aren't functioning properly and that he knows best.

In conclusion, I'm just going to say that the "estimated costs for municipalities to comply with the proposed act are a major concern...." That's in the report. "In addition, as user rates are used to fund the necessary system improvements (per legislation) and pending capital needs, the ability to pay will ... be considered for certain segments of the residential sector."

Your water bill is going to go up 8% per year, and with this it's going to go up about 20% a year. The consumers of Ontario should be outraged and concerned. Look at your electricity bill.

Time-of-use meters: This is another initiative by Premier McGuinty to increase the cost of essential services like electricity and water.

I'd encourage people to look forward to Bill 72 and the government's silence on this important bill of public safety, when they're saying nothing. I think it's a shame, and I would hope that even in their ability to respond in the two minutes that they would actually take time to at least explain, if not take exception, with some of the remarks that I may have made.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I sat here through the duration of the comments by the member from Durham. He makes some very important points. He appeals to the government backbenchers to stand up and participate in this debate.

One of the things I noticed—and the comments by the member for Durham underscored this for me—is that every time you've got a bill with a flowery preamble like this one has, there's very little that follows it. Think about it. The more flowery the preamble, the less substantial the bill. I'm going to speak to this, as a matter of fact; in around seven or eight minutes' time I'm going to address some of the silly stuff that's in the preamble, as well as some of the perhaps insubstantial stuff that's in the so-called body of the bill.

I want to make it clear that the New Democrats are going to support this bill on second reading. We're going to force it to committee. No way are we going to let this bill be ordered for third reading without it being forced into committee. New Democrats have every intention of ensuring that this bill goes to committee, and we will use the standing orders to make sure that this government puts this bill in committee.

Having said that, the majority of the members on the committee are going to be government members and they will control the amount of time and the number of people who have access to that committee.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask the member to withdraw.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I thank the government House leader for withdrawing those scurrilous comments. I thank the Speaker for her sage intervention.

As I say here, I'm running out of time already. I thank the member for Durham once again. I'll be speaking to this; so will Mr. Prue. He's here as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the remarks made by my colleague from Durham. I really find it painful to recall the events of Walkerton, but his outrageous depiction—what I can only describe as revisionist history in relation to that particular episode—compels me to remind the members on that side that prior to Walkerton, they had removed the safeguards, the checks and balances that protected our drinking water supply.

Mr. Randy Hillier: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The member has just made a statement and I think it's incumbent that she explain which safeguards were removed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): That's not a point of order.

The member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Unfortunately, some time elapsed. That was precisely what I was going to do. Medical officers of health no longer received drinking water reports from municipalities. Public health laboratories were privatized. The medical officer of health for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, when he started to suspect that the illness caused in Walkerton might be related to the drinking water, had the greatest difficulty in receiving those drinking water reports. That delayed the opportunities to prevent 2,000 people becoming ill and seven people dying. I don't consider that a laughing matter, and I think it's imperative that we put the record the way it was found in Mr. Justice O'Connor's report.

Unfortunately, because time is so short, I don't have the opportunity to rebut some of the other comments, and I hope that some other members of this Legislature will be prepared to put the record straight.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: It gives me great pleasure to provide some comments in response to the member for Durham. I just find it amazing that the member for Oak Ridges–Markham—finally, we have somebody from this government who is going to stand up and speak on this bill. I just can't believe the fact that we had their opportunity first and it was passed to our party. It's fine.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We spoke on it yesterday.

Mr. Steve Clark: We spoke on it as well, House leader. We spoke on it as well.

I'll take you back to some of the comments that the member for Haldimand-Norfolk mentioned, because one thing you can't say about this government is that they don't like anniversaries. They also like a lot of green smoke too, because they throw up a lot of green smoke when it comes to the energy file. Bill 72 is no exception. You know, it was extremely close to the 10th anniversary of Walkerton when this bill was introduced, and here we are now, some four months later, and finally we are now hearing some more about Bill 72.

It's not uncommon as well that near the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, on April 22, the government announced an initiative about waste diversion, yet we are still waiting on that legislation. However, we sure weren't waiting for what happened on July 1, with eco fees. I can remember calling my constituency office on the Monday after that weekend.

Let's face it. We had the HST brought in by this government, we had the eco fees brought in by this government, and we had the microFIT boondoggle where they switched rates on people. My staff in the constituency office, Lynn Campbell and Pauline Connolly, had more calls that day than any other day they worked for an MPP, and they worked for my predecessor for about 15 years. That's the type of government we are dealing with here.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Beaches-East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Durham, as I always do, especially when he got into the portion talking about municipalities, because as members of this House know, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario recently held their annual meeting in Windsor, Ontario. I was there, as were many members of the government, of the opposition, to listen to what municipalities had to say, what the reeves and the mayors and the councillors had to say to the government. One of the things they talked about was the costs, the costs that are being borne by the municipalities that don't have the monies to do it properly. And this bill, unless there is some financial remuneration made to those municipalities, will impact severely on their bottom line, on their ability to carry out the functions that this Legislature sets. The member from Durham set that out quite well.

He also asked about the authority, whether we need to establish different authorities, more than what exist today, whether the municipalities in their collective right, all 444 of them, are doing the right thing by water conservation, by water purification, by sewage removal and all the like. I'm not sure whether the body of the bill contains that information for us to make the kind of assessment that we need to. I commend the member from Durham.

I believe the government will be sending this, after second reading, to committee. I look forward to hearing

what the municipalities have to say, as well as I look forward to what the First Nations have to say, because I think those are the two glaring potential errors that are contained within the body of the bill.

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I welcome the member from Oak Ridges-Markham, and if she wishes to speak again today—I think what she had to say was quite cogent, and if she seeks unanimous consent to speak again, I for one would want to hear what she has to say on this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to thank the members from Welland, Oak Ridges-Markham, Leeds-Grenville and Beaches-East York.

I did also read the member from Oak Ridges-Markham's remarks yesterday. You used about 30 minutes; you had an hour. You're the only one who spoke and, today, I commend you. I recognize you are a medical doctor. I also recognize you were the medical officer of health for York region, I believe it was, and you do know of what you speak. I'd ask you if you get a chance to speak again today to say—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me. I'd ask that you direct your comments through the Chair.

Mr. John O'Toole: Exactly. I'd ask that the former medical officer of health for York region—does this imply that our municipalities are not able to do the job or are not doing their job and that our water's unsafe? That's what the subtle language of this says, that they're not capable or competent.

I can understand that some regions of the province may need help. Indeed, First Nations in northern Ontario is just one example where people are dying because of not having adequate water. Get on with the job as opposed to building another bureaucracy here. I call on you, unlike the northern planning act, to actually consult with First Nations, consult with northern communities.

Actually, one of the recommendations and conclusions of Durham region's report, and I can read it, was for "a standing committee of the Legislature for public hearings after second reading. This may be another opportunity for the region to submit its position." They also say, "However, there are numerous concerns related to sustainability plans" related to duplication of efforts, increased costs and a loss of local autonomy.

I can say to you, Madam Speaker, this is an important topic: safe, clean water for every citizen, child or adult. The people of Ontario deserve no less. This bill's a lot of bureaucracy, and at the end of the day it's a tax coming out—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: My colleague Mr. Prue, the very capable member from Beaches-East York, will be addressing this bill this afternoon as well—if he has time, if he gets to his turn in the rotation, because, of course, I only have 20 minutes. After I speak, of course, there's 10

minutes for questions and comments, and then the Liberals have 20 minutes. For the life of me, I don't understand why a Liberal—here, we've been away for three months now, give or take, and for the life of me I don't understand—I mean, I've been jonesing for the place. I don't understand why Liberal members wouldn't be full of vim and vinegar and eager to get up on their feet and speak to a bill, especially one that the government says it's so proud of. This government's had a hard time over the summer. It has been the summer of McGuinty's discontent, of the public's discontent.

You know where I live. I live down in Welland, on the Welland Canal. I'm pleased and honoured to represent the folks in Welland, as well as Port Colborne just south of us, again on the Welland Canal, on Lake Erie to boot, and then Wainfleet just west of there and then up north to Thorold and the south end of St. Catharines, all on the Welland Canal. We've got lots of water where I come from. As a matter of fact one of the most contentious local issues over the last five or six years was the insistence of a couple of city councillors on installing water meters.

When I go back home to Welland on the weekend, if I get there for Friday morning—I can't always get there for Friday morning—I go down to the Port Colborne farmers' market, an excellent farmers' market. The peaches and plums are still very fresh. Corn's still there. The farms are producing great vegetables still. It's been a remarkable year. Cherries suffered a little bit, but the peaches have done well. And the apples, of course, are out now.

But when you go to the market—that's what you do in places like Welland and Port Colborne or places where so many of the other members of this assembly live—you talk to folks, and you listen to what they've got to say. Well, all hell broke loose several years ago when, some would say, a misguided council imposed water meters on the citizenry of Welland, and the myths that were exploited were substantial. There was an effort to paint us as living in some sort of desert where water was a scarce commodity. But as I say, we're around the canal. We've got Lake Erie to the south of us and Lake Ontario to the north of us, and the Niagara River—although the American contribution to the Niagara River, at least downstream, makes it less than palatable, never mind potable. The imagery that was painted was of the person watering their lawn, and the wasted water in watering the lawn, and, "Why should those people pay the same water rates as people who don't water their lawn?" Most people that I know who have lawns water them; at least, they used to. Or what about the fellow or gal who washes their car? There was this effort to create this very distorted picture about, "Who's the water waster?"

There already was a surcharge, as you know, as there was in most flat-rate communities, for people who had a swimming pool, let's say. They had a surcharge on their water bill. One of the troubling things about water meters in and of themselves is that they defeat what I understand historically was the fundamental role of public water:

Public water was a health and safety issue. Before we had public water systems, cities were very, very dangerous places to live in. If you didn't burn up, you got any number of communicable diseases that, more often than not, blew up into plagues because of the lack of water for sanitary purposes. You didn't have water for the purposes of sewage systems.

I've always perceived water as a public right. I have always thought that there's something inherently wrong about metering water when what that means is that the young family with four or five kids, folks who do laundry every day, are going to pay far more for their water than I do—sure, they'll have used more water—when, in fact, I can afford to pay more, while they can't.

I've always been a flat-rate person when it comes to water, excepting the surcharges. I believe that a combination of property taxes and, more importantly, income taxes should be used to provide safe, clean water to everybody in the community. Why I am talking to this is because people talk to me at the market on Saturday morning in Welland or Port Colborne. There's a Thorold market too—very, very small. Pelham has a market on Friday nights; I'm sure it's Friday nights—very, very small.

I talked to you about the preamble. The rule of thumb is, the longer the preamble, the more flowery the language, the less likely there is to be any substantive legislation following it. I want to put to you that it's very much the case here. The preamble—and this is so condescending. It really is. Premier Dad has done it once again, although just this last week, I realized that if he has been Premier Dad, now that he introduces Internet gambling and Poker Lotto, he's Premier Bad.

The Premier actually said—because we were concerned about some perhaps inappropriate lobbying of the Premier and we raised it with the Integrity Commissioner. The Premier said, "The only people who lobbied me for mixed martial arts were my kids." I don't disbelieve him, but he hasn't dared to tell us that it's kids who lobbied for Internet gambling or that it's his kids who lobbied for Poker Lotto.

He has had a bad few months. The G20: Remember that, back in June, and the secret legislation that has been interpreted at least three different ways now by the very authors of that legislation, the members of Mr. McGuinty's own cabinet? That was bad. He had to flip-flop on mixed martial arts. That was bad. You add Internet gambling—and the remarkable thing is, you just saw this House debate, earlier today, the report of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. What would that committee have thought and what would they have said had they been warned that the Premier was going to introduce Internet gambling so that 13-year-old kids can be sitting in the privacy of their bedrooms at their computer maxing out mommy or daddy's credit card? It will happen. And Internet gambling is the most addictive form of it. The neuroscience is pretty well developed: It's highly addictive stuff. You don't even have to shower and shave and go out to the casino to do Internet gaming;

you can wake up after a bender, be sitting there in yesterday's underwear and get right back at the computer console. There's no interaction. Like the drunk who doesn't bother to shower or shave before he has his first beer in the morning, the gambling addict won't bother to shower or shave before he or she sits down at that computer console.

1610

And the Poker Lotto: very clever stuff. Brilliant. Brilliant, because you see, the problem with scratch-and-win tickets is that people take them home and scratch them, or to the Tim Hortons, and it might be a day or two or three days later that they go back. With the Poker Lotto, whether or not you win on the hand that you're dealt on the screen—I tell you, I spent two bucks to see it work. Didn't win a dime, but I didn't expect to.

The Poker Lotto, the screen on top of the blue machine—it's a virtual card game. The hand deals and flips over the cards. It is very fast. I've watched people do the scratch-and-wins, and to most people, it's like lovemaking. They want to make it last long and do it slowly and affectionately. You've seen them, haven't you? They want to maintain the suspense. They scratch one and they contemplate and they go "Maybe." Then they scratch another and then maybe they'll have their coffee. I've seen people make a scratch-and-win card last 30 minutes. With Poker Lotto, it's less than 30 seconds. It's approximately, if I recall, five seconds to be dealt that hand. By then you're caught up in it, and then you're going to try again, another toonie. It's a toonie at a time. These aren't high-stakes games. It's a toonie at a time.

We know what the intended market is. It's not the high rollers; it's the people who stop in at the corner store for their bread or milk or cigarettes or for their lotto ticket. And it's not just Wednesday or now, of course, Thursday, Friday and Saturday; it's literally Sunday through to Monday inclusive. That machine and that game is designed to get people in that corner store on a daily basis to play the numbers racket. That's bad.

So Premier Dad is really Premier Bad. Premier Dad is really a secret racketeer. Premier—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I withdraw.

Premier Dad is dealing from the bottom of the deck. He fancies himself a card shark. But keep an eye on the ace up his sleeves and, again, for that notorious dealing from the bottom of the deck.

Bill 72 talks about how Ontarians can learn how to conserve. Individuals can change their behaviour. Oh, come on. This is a real urban/rural divide issue in and of itself. Anybody who grew up in the country like I did, down in Crowland, down in the east of Welland as a kid, where we had a septic tank and a weeping bed system—we learned how to conserve water, not because we didn't have a source of water, but because you had to be careful about when and how you flushed. And the weeping beds: You know those, the weeping beds? We had a pretty big one, and the bright green stripes showed you where the

tiles were, right, Mr. Hillier? You knew exactly where the nutrient was flowing.

Ontarians are smart people. They will conserve; just ask them and help them.

And those low-flow toilets, member from Durham? The three-flush toilets. How do you save water when you've got to flush it three times? Tell me.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Oh, please. They're two- and three-flush toilets. You end up using more water than less, until you just get disgusted and upset and say, "I'll come back in an hour."

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's true.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Can't let that happen.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It does happen.

Ontarians will conserve water. You know what one of the problems we've got down in Niagara is? We've got old communities like Port Colborne and Welland and Thorold, old historic industrial communities that have infrastructure under the ground that's decaying. Year after year we're reminded by the region that we lose gallons upon gallons of water from when it's treated to when it gets to the tap in underwater pipes that are corroded. Simply the passage of time has made them highly inefficient—huge losses of water.

Communities are going to be called upon to create plans. Of course, the government is going to have, I dare say, aspirational targets. What is an aspirational target? An aspirational target is the same thing the gambler has when she or he puts a toonie down to buy that stupid Poker Lotto ticket. They aspire to win but they're not going to.

By the way, while we're getting to those lottery machines, you put warning labels on cigarettes and alcohol. The minister responsible talked about Poker Lotto as a new, fun game. He talked about Internet gambling as entertainment. Please. If we warn people about drinking and smoking, why aren't there big signs on those lotto machines that say, "Sucker, you're going to lose your money"?

The government says it's concerned about problem gambling and problem gaming, yet it has reduced from \$40 million to \$28 million its contribution to gambling addiction treatment programs. It's a pretty big reduction, isn't it? The government says it's concerned about problem gambling and problem gaming, yet it promotes, through OLG, its gambling schemes with huge, glossy ads—the disgusting and, as Jim Coyle wrote, I believe, revolting happy dance. For the vast majority of people who gamble, it's not a happy dance; it's a sad dance. And they're not very impressed with Premier Dad. They understand that he's really Premier Bad.

Cities like Welland that have lost a whole lot of their industrial tax base are cash-strapped. Residential taxpayers can't afford any more. Increasingly, I'm talking to seniors who have built their homes, who have paid for them and who are worried about not being able to continue to live in them because they can't afford the

new electricity rates. They're going to be hammered on fuel rates with the government's HST added to the cost of heating fuel come this winter. And for electricity rates, you ain't seen nothing yet, because not everybody has an air conditioner, but everybody has a furnace, and most of those furnaces have motors in them that drive fans, and that's one of the largest electricity users in your house. You ain't seen nothing yet until you see your winter electricity bills. These people are truly afraid. They talk to Mr. Prue in his riding. They talk to me in my riding. I'm sure they talk to every single one of the people in this chamber in their respective ridings. They're fearful about not being able to live in their homes. Property taxpayers in Welland can't pay any more. There's just no more left in the bank account. There's no more left on the credit card.

You saw in the *Globe and Mail* today that one of the significant depressants in terms of economic recovery is the fact that consumers don't have money. It's on the front page of the *Globe and Mail*. Consumers don't have money to spend. Recoveries are driven by several factors and one of them is by consumers, people who buy things that other people make. Canadians don't have money to spend, and they don't have money for hydro rates that are skyrocketing thanks to Premier McGuinty. They don't have the money for HST fees on everything from kids' sports and ballet lessons through to heating fuel and, quite frankly, dying. The government can talk all it wants about creating new water technologies and about municipalities developing plans to upgrade water systems, but they need the money to do it.

You've got Wainfleet down there, a small community, a lakeside community, a farming community. You've got a whole strip of lakeside houses, many of them historic, that are at risk of having the Big Pipe imposed on them, because somebody decided that their wells, sewer systems, septic tanks and weeping beds weren't adequate. The region won't red-tag the bad septic tanks and force those people to upgrade them. Wainfleet doesn't have a regional representative. Its mayor is ex officio on regional council. Wainfleet residents don't get to vote for a regional representative as a stand-alone representative. So you've got a big-city region, St. Catharines, telling country people how to live in the country. Those people know full well how to live in the country. You're looking at a proposition that is going to cost individual homeowners \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000, \$60,000 each—who knows?

It's simply unaffordable. The municipality has a modest tax base; it can't afford the work on its own, and the region is reluctant to accept its regional role of supporting smaller communities that don't have the infrastructure and don't have the tax base or the resources to finance it, and to boot, the cost of it is going to be tremendous, even for the regional municipality of Niagara.

1620

So where are Mr. McGuinty and his Minister of the Environment when it comes to helping out the folks in Wainfleet? Nowhere. The Premier is too busy thinking

up new lottery schemes. He's on the phone with Tony Soprano, figuring out how he can milk the pockets of Ontarians in the next round. Maybe we'll have dice games on every corner. He'll be like that character—what's that musical about the craps game and so on? I don't know. But it will be like—what's the guy?

Mr. Michael Prue: I don't know. There's an old song, "Mr. Lee."

Mr. Peter Kormos: He'll have the big gold cufflinks and the hat and the big pinky ring. I've seen those guys. They used to play upstairs at Bill's pool hall, their Saturday night poker game or craps game, the guys from Niagara Falls—with big hands. And they all had names like Joe Mountain and stuff, right? You would never talk back to them.

We'll call him Dapper Dalton. He'll be the dapper don of Ontario, and he'll have a pair of dice in his hand, rattling them all the time. But be careful, because them dice are shaved. You know that, don't you? You can't get a fair game with Dalton McGuinty. You're going to be taken to the cleaners. The cards are marked, he's dealing from the bottom of the deck and the dice are shaved. Mark my words.

This stuff, as I told you, we're going to support. It's going to go to committee; we're going to insist on that. Let's see what municipalities big and small, the ones with minimal tax bases, have to say about the obligations that this might impose upon them, obligations that they'd love to fulfill but simply can't afford to, and have received no support from this government, because this government has done nothing to upload the Harris download; nothing at all. It has maintained the Harris legacy very well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I have to say that all through the summer I did look forward to coming back to the Legislature, and one big reason was that I wanted to hear the member from Welland, because it's always good to hear you speak, sir, so thank you very much. I heard your whole 20 minutes very closely, to the point that I went running and got some extra notes to rebut some of the arguments you were presenting. I heard a lot about lottery and all kinds of things, but I had to cobble together what you were trying to get to. I think what you were trying to get to is to see what kind of investments this government has been making when it comes to waterworks in smaller municipalities, or municipalities in general.

I wanted to, in my very limited time, share some numbers with you. Since 2003, since the McGuinty government came into office, \$1.8 billion in infrastructure for municipal water systems have been invested—\$1.8 billion. Another \$1.5 billion in low-interest loans through Infrastructure Ontario—

Interjection.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Low-interest special loans.

Another \$50 million through the Ontario small waterworks assistance program, helping small municipal-

ities when it comes to waterworks projects. Let's not forget—because you used the word “downloading,” sir—all the work this government has done in uploading social services from the backs of municipalities, which the previous government had downloaded, back to the province. We're talking about ODSP; we're talking about Ontario Works; we are talking about the drug benefit program, which will result in significant advantages to our municipalities. I can speak for my own municipality, the city of Ottawa: We are looking at about a \$100-million-per-year saving when uploading has been fully completed. That is significant.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Welland, as has been said, is always informative when he speaks, and I do appreciate the fact that he has. He did point out a few things, one of which was the inconsistencies of the McGuinty government, saying one thing and doing another, and that certainly is the case here, I believe.

If you look back on the history of this bill, the bill in 2002, Bill 175, was the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act, which did many of the things that are required in this bill except it did not create another bureaucracy and didn't impugn that the lower-tier municipalities were incapable or unwilling to have clear water systems.

I reported today on Durham region's work on the importance of clean, safe drinking water under regulations which are set by the province, and they are doing it, including the full cost recovery.

That bill that I reported, Bill 175, did have in it the full cost recovery model, required guidelines, and entities, mainly municipalities, to prepare approvals for reports of provisions of water services and water safety. The report also included inventory and management plans—many of the same things. So I don't really understand, when the economy's going south, why they're busy talking about things that may need attention.

The member from Welland pointed out—I think his summary, his last remark, was that they haven't uploaded one thing that was downloaded. In fact, they've overwritten a lot of stuff by giving it different branding. The Green Energy Act is an example of another form of taxation through your electricity. This bill is another form of taxation through your water bill. They're going to mandate certain kinds of conservation measures. If you use more than 600 litres per day, which is kind of the average today—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I, too, was very glad to come back after the summer to hear my colleague from Welland, although I must admit that I get to hear him more often than you, and I get to hear him in caucus meetings and around the province as well.

He always speaks the truth. He always speaks from the bottom of his heart. He speaks in ways that his constituents can understand. What he had to say today was

totally relevant: How are small municipalities going to be able to afford the costs of this particular bill?

Nobody is going to deny that we need to conserve water. Nobody is going to deny that some of the provisions of this bill are welcome and that they need to be enacted. But the question comes down to, how is it going to be enforced and who is going to enforce it?

Is this government going to get the necessary funds from running all of these new poker schemes? Are you going to get it from gambling? Are you going to get it from watching people beat their brains out in the middle of a ring? How are you going to get the money? How are the municipalities going to get the money? This is the question that the government has not answered.

We know that some of the larger municipalities—and my friend from Ottawa spoke about that. You know, that's the second-largest city in Ontario. That's like Toronto. I mean, we live here, and although times are tough and monies are tight, there is a way to struggle through. But when you go to small-town Ontario and you tell them that they're going to have to redo their water or their sewer system, when you go to northern Ontario and you go to a First Nations community that struggles with 80% and 90% unemployment and no revenues, how are they going to fix their system when you enact this legislation? That's what I want Liberals to stand up and talk about. That's what the member from Welland talked about, and I hope that one of you will stand up and say how it's going to be done. I commend him, as always, for his speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to rise and make a few comments on Bill 72, the Water Opportunities Act. Of course, we know how vital water is to all of us. It sustains our lives and that of all things on earth, so it's a very important topic indeed.

Our proposed Water Opportunities Act will make Ontario a water technology leader. This is the focus of this particular bill and what we want to expand in this age of green economies. We want to build on this knowledge and provide it to the world.

I saw on a television show recently that probably more of the world is lacking in water than most people might realize. They don't have the expertise to find the water. They don't have the expertise to make it clean and potable for their people. Certainly there was a great concern in that particular show that we need to do something to help our fellow man in this regard, and this is a way in which that might be achieved. In some cases, water is very, very deep into ground. It's not something that we are particularly accustomed to. I have a well on my farm that's about 130 feet or so. We also have water as close as 30 feet to the ground in the same area. But in other countries it can be extremely deep.

1630

Some folks think that water may become a greater issue than oil in the future of the world, and that may be the case. I don't know if it is imminent, but certainly

there are writers who think that water will certainly be more important than what oil is to us currently, and I think that just emphasizes the need for to us take the water opportunities that we propose.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Welland has two minutes to respond—and I believe you were looking for Guys and Dolls.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I believe you're right. But what's the name of the character? The gambler?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm advised it was Guy Masterson.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Right you are, Speaker, Guy Masterson. That's the character I'm thinking of. Thank you very much, Speaker. The Speaker guides us through these debates and counsels us and provides resources that are beyond the call of mere mortals, so I appreciate it. Guy Masterson, yes. That's the gambler—the craps game.

The Speaker, of course, is assisted by her clerks, and one should never underestimate their role. But they play such a quiet role here. Some day we're going to have to see them burst out and give counsel loudly and aggressively.

Here's the moment of truth. Because as I sit down in one minute's time, it is now the Liberal turn in the rotation. Some Liberal backbencher, after three months of not being here, three months plus, will have the chance to get on her or his feet and speak to this bill and explain how excited they are to be back here. They have a full 20 minutes. Talking about how scarce water is, time is scarce here. We only have 20-minute speaking slots, and for the life of me, I've never passed one up if my life depended on it. You couldn't pay me to bypass a 20-minute speaking slot—you couldn't pay me enough. So here's a chance for a Liberal member to stand up, be heard, to demonstrate. There are some very articulate speakers on the other side of this House, some very capable speakers. I want to hear one of those loquacious Liberal backbenchers defend this bill right here and now—20 minutes, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I guess today is the day to make mention of how much we look forward to coming back to the House. I heard some nice comments from the member from Ottawa Centre about hearing the member from Welland's eloquence. Of course, I'm happy to be back here so we can hear the scurrilous comments of the government House leader to the member of Welland. I've been along forward that all summer, for sure.

Here we have Bill 72, and what is the name of this one? This is An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010, and it goes on. Just before I came down here to the House, I thought, "You know, we have an awful lot of water legislation in this province, don't we?" I always found that we had a fair bit of water legislation, and I was surprised that we needed another piece of legislation. So I went on e-Laws and did a little browsing

to see what pieces of legislation we already had for water. Lo and behold, I printed off five of the acts so I could do a little reading. There are five them here, but actually there are about 350 in total. We have things like the Safe Drinking Water Act, O. Reg. 170/03. We have the Environmental Protection Act, O. Reg. 153/04; the Ontario Water Resources Act, regulation 40; the Clean Water Act, 2006; the Nutrient Management Act, regulation 267/03; and we could go on and on—the sustainable water and sewage act from 2002.

About 350 pieces of regulations are governing water in this province, and today we have another bill, Bill 72, to govern water. I remember a short while ago the Premier of this province, the leader of the Liberal Party, Dalton McGuinty, promising that he would not bring in any more regulations unless he took away one of the regulations. That was his commitment, to get rid of the red tape. So I want to ask the members on the opposite side, which one of the existing regulations are you going to take away? Which one of the existing 350 regulations are you going to remove as you introduce Bill 72 to, of course, keep up with your leader's commitment that for every one that he introduces, he would remove another one?

Now, of course, I'm being a little facetious. We all know that keeping promises is a very difficult undertaking for the Premier, Dalton McGuinty, and his cabinet and backbenchers really don't expect him to keep promises. They're just those things that you put out in the window for the media to have a little bite on, show the public that he'd really like to do that but, really, don't expect him to achieve that. That's really not—no expectation on the part of Liberals to uphold promises.

But I think what we can see with Bill 72, what's really clear here, other than when you read the bill, you can see that what's evident is that there is a steady drip of incompetence with this Liberal government when it comes to water legislation. It's just drip, drip, drip, another drip, 350 drips of incompetence. But there is an underlying motivation to that steady drip of incompetence that we see with all this legislation: money.

Water is so, so important to this Liberal Party, to this Liberal government, because it is a revenue stream for government. Water is not important because we want clean water. Water is not important because it is a necessity for human life. Water is important because it's a source of revenue for the Liberal Party. That's what is important about water: making water into a commodity that government can derive significant revenue from.

That's what Bill 72 is all about. And, of course, we all know that government revenues, government income is not something that they create. It's not something that they produce. Government revenue is something that they take from somebody else. That's what government revenue is, and Bill 72 allows government to take more money. They're creating another agency. And what's the name of this agency? It's quite an amazing little name that we have: the Water Technologies Acceleration Project.

1640

So here we have another agency. If the Liberals haven't already learned their lesson from eHealth and OLG, from the endless scandals from their agencies and their untendered contracts, the endless scandals of the patronage from their unelected, unaccountable agencies, what are they to do? They're going to create another agency under Bill 72, another unelected, unaccountable agency. That now puts us past 600 of these pork barrel agencies by the Liberal government who will take money from somebody else, put a cost on other people, put a cost on municipalities.

It's interesting, right in section 3: "Part III of the act requires certain municipalities, persons and entities to prepare, approve and submit to the Minister of the Environment municipal water sustainability plans...." We saw all this during the Clean Water Act debate. I'm sure that many of the Liberals here remember that Clean Water Act debate, the committee hearings that went around the province, where you took the authority to charge for private water under that bill and you're reinforcing it now with Bill 72 and another unelected, unaccountable agency.

We'll go back to some of these other acts. The Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act was another one. We don't often hear about that one. The Lake Simcoe Protection Act, the Fluoridation Act, the Toxics Reduction Act—all these acts have a significant component of water regulation in them. The Beds of Navigable Waters Act, the Conservation Land Act—and we go on and on. There's, of course, a raft—the Conservation Authorities Act, regulations 98, 99, 100, 101. We can go on and on with existing legislation, but nowhere in those 350 regulations could they do what they want to do with Bill 72, so they think. They don't think they could have created another agency out of one of those 350? I think that if they really tried, they could have, but they want to really strengthen their hand, at the cost of municipal government. Municipal government is going to have such a burdensome time covering this.

We heard from the member from Durham very clearly about the professionals at the municipality of Durham raising their concerns of just how much this is going to cost. It's not something they can put an exact figure to, but we know it's a huge cost. It is creating immense concern with all municipalities, as this government just continues to roll out the red tape.

During the holidays I got my new pocket edition of Ontario Provincial Offences. That's the new pocket edition. That was done up before some of the acts that are being introduced in the House this session. It has another 150 more pages in it this year than last year. It has increased by about 1,500 pages since this Liberal government came to power in 2004. Just in 2004, this book was only 2,000 pages; it's now 3,500 pages in length. You need to have some pretty deep pockets living in Ontario with Dalton McGuinty as Premier. You're going to have to get bigger and bigger pockets, not just to hold that book, but to keep Dalton McGuinty's hands warm in

there as well. A half a million regulations we now have in this province, over half a million regulations.

What is the solution for the Ontario Liberal government? Let's take some more money from some more people by creating some more legislation and some more unelected, unaccountable agencies, third party agencies. We've heard that term, third party agencies, arm's-length agencies, but the only thing that's really arm's length about them is that the Liberal arm is attached to them. The Liberal political arm is attached to them and embraces them. They're the ones who appoint their friends, their buddies, into these nice positions, like Pat Dillon. Pat Dillon is on the WSIB. He's on Working Families. He gets quite a few of those perks.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: You guys voted for all of them.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The member from Algoma, what was that? You're endorsing Pat Dillon taking all that patronage money? Very important. It's very good for the member of Algoma to—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Your comments will go through the Chair.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Unelected, unaccountable agencies, boards and commissions are the lifeblood of this Liberal Party. Of course, they breathe with tax money. They just can't get enough tax money. And these agencies, boards and commissions are their favoured vehicle. This is their favoured vehicle to take more money from people.

I know that earlier today the Speaker ruled some words out of order regarding the way this is done by the Liberal Party, but we do know that agencies, boards and commissions provide a certain level of camouflage for this Liberal government. They provide that covering that the Liberals hope deflects the public's view of who's taking their money.

This is Bill 72. I can just see the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, whatever minister of the day—when the municipalities are up in arms about this new cost, when their taxpayers are up in arms about this new cost on water, Premier McGuinty will say, "It's not me, it's not us; it's this new agency that was created."

It's much the same as what we see with the LHINs, the local health integration networks. When they close emergency rooms and the hospitals in Fort Erie or throughout the province, the Minister of Health says, "It's not me that's doing that. It's this unelected, unaccountable local health integration network," which just happens to be fully stocked to the brim with Liberal friends. They're just loaded to the rafters with friends of the Liberal Party, loaded to the rafters with consultants from Courtyard, loaded to the rafters with you know what. They are loaded at the expense of individuals and municipalities.

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I see the member from Algoma is getting a little upset. I guess it's cutting a little too close

to the heart about the costs and the actions of this Liberal Party and how they demean and diminish the role of people in this province as they just continue to create the half a million regulations—because, of course, there's nothing as important for the Liberals as taking more money.

1650

With the 350 different regulations and schedules that are already on the books, why do we need another one? Can we not have water in this province that doesn't require over 350 separate regulations and schedules? Here's just one, the Ontario Water Resources Act, and it's 126 pages in length. Another one, the Environmental Protection Act, is 160 pages. The Safe Drinking Water Act is 160 pages. How many bloody acts does this Liberal government need to pass to have clean water in this province? That's three pieces of legislation—and there are over 350 different schedules and regulations, all far more substantial in length than those. The regulations just on the Nutrient Management Act—over 300 pages in length.

This government's view is that we need more red tape, more cost, and they want more money. As I said at the beginning of this speech, what we've seen here in seven years of Liberal Party rule is a drip, drip, drip of incompetence, red tape, legislation, taxation, fees, plus unelected and unaccountable agencies growing at the same rate as this book of half a million regulations. That's what this province has seen for the last seven years. That's why this province has become a have-not province under this Liberal government. That's why we've gone from being the engine of Confederation to the caboose of Confederation—because this Liberal government sees their interest as taking more money from people.

The idea that they should safeguard the public's interest is completely unknown to them. What they see as important is safeguarding their political interests. It does not matter what the individual in Peterborough thinks; it's what the Liberal Party thinks. It's not what the municipality on Manitoulin Island thinks; it's what the Liberal Party thinks.

We are on a dangerous road, and here Bill 72 continues the same path that the Liberals have started.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, and I want to say to him that the summer did not diminish even one iota his fiery passion for this place. It did not diminish one iota, either, the way in which he speaks words that he truly believes. I listened to what he had to say, and although I do not always agree with every position he takes, he is right to take on a government. That is the role—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: No. That is the role of an opposition member—

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Did you agree to some of those things?

Mr. Michael Prue: I would agree to some of the things you say. So that works two ways.

What he had to say today was taking on a government that I think has become very complacent, taking on a government that has not done its homework on this bill or a great many other bills, taking on a government that seems able to shift with the wind on any number of issues, from online gambling to people beating their brains out in the middle of a ring to any other thing over the summer, and he is right to say what he had to say. He is right to bring up what needs to be said in terms of the municipalities, what needs to be said in terms of First Nations communities, and to ask this government to take a soul-searching look at what you found out this summer. Surely, most of the government members went back, as I'm sure the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington did, and talked to their constituents. I'm sure what he is saying today is what he has heard from most of them. So I commend him, and I'm glad to be back in this place. I'm glad to listen to what he has to say. And I'm hoping against hope that after I speak—because I'm the next speaker up—that a government member will stand up and actually say something on this bill. I have been waiting all summer to hear what you have to say on this and other bills, and I'm hoping that somebody has the fortitude to do exactly that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Oak Ridges-Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd certainly like to take this opportunity to comment on the remarks by the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. I'd like to tell him that I'm proud to be a member of a government that takes both the safety of our water supply and its legislative responsibilities so seriously. We need those acts. We need those acts and regulations to ensure that our water is safe not only in terms of the quality of the water supply but, as this act does, to ensure that we have sufficient quantity going forward.

I'd like to remind him that the McGuinty government has put in place measures that make our drinking water supply the best protected in the world. Not only do we have very stringent science-based standards currently; I'd like to assure the member that the work is ongoing. In fact, in the Ministry of the Environment the issue of water quality standards is alive and well, and as the science continues to come in, we are looking at those current standards to see if they need amendment. So whether it be the level of tritium in drinking water, trihalomethanes, these are the subject of ongoing review.

What we have at present in Ontario, according to our chief drinking water inspector, is a very safe supply of water. Some 99% of water tests show drinking water of a quality that is for human consumption. We do still have "boil water" advisories in effect—one of those checks and balances that are so necessary, that our medical officers of health initiate in their communities at the slightest suspicion of a threat to the drinking water supply. This is the kind of action that marks a civilized

society, and I'm proud to be a member of this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Steve Clark: It gives me great pleasure to provide some comments in regard to the speech made by my colleague the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, my neighbour to the north. He does speak very passionately about this government's record, and again I think he made a very compelling argument when he showed and talked about the 350 schedules and separate pieces of regulation that are involved with water right now. He only showed three of them, I believe, and as he highlighted, there were hundreds of pages—page after page after page of regulation and separate schedules in regard to water.

Again, I hope, as the member for Beaches—East York mentioned, that there is a government speaker soon, because as I mentioned earlier in this debate, when I had just a brief moment, this government again seems to be wonderful in trying to get green headlines. They wait until the 10th anniversary of Walkerton, they make a big announcement, and now we wait four months. At the time they entered the legislation—I believe it was May 18—there was no debate. In fact, our critic from Haldimand—Norfolk, who spoke yesterday, was all ready to speak on the act in May, and it just passed by. On April 22, the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, where people look to their government for action, they look for them to do something, and this government makes an announcement, introduces a Waste Diversion Act, and we haven't heard a peep from them since. Again, we didn't hear a peep from them after that May 18 announcement, after that April 22 announcement. We want to hear something from them today.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm just excited. I'm pleased to have listened to the comments of Mr. Hillier from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, but I'm excited about the fact that the next speaker is Michael Prue, the member for Beaches—East York. When I was checking his riding name, I realized that if you can't call it "the Beaches" anymore, you've got to call it "the Beach." Your riding name shouldn't be Beaches—East York, it should be Beach—East York, and that's a problem that he's going to have to deal with, perhaps through private members' public business.

Michael Prue, of course, was the very competent, successful and popular mayor of East York and accomplished a great deal and did a great deal around the whole issue of water and clean water. One of the interesting things that many people don't know is that John Papadakis, a paralegal down in Fort Erie way, was a member of his, Mr. Prue's, council at the time and was the deciding vote in Mr. Prue becoming interim mayor. Then, of course, he won in a municipal election in his own right to be the very successful mayor of East York.

So his views on this particular bill are views and his comments are comments that we should pay a great deal of attention to. He's been there in the municipal trenches, if you will, as a councillor and then as a mayor. I suspect he may comment on the inability of communities to raise the tax revenues that are going to be necessary to comply with the requirements that this government's going to impose on them, and that if communities don't have the assistance of their provincial—and, for that matter, federal governments—naught can come of this type of bill, this type of legislation.

Once again, New Democrats will be supporting it, we will be forcing it to committee, and we'll be looking forward to hearing what municipal leaders, big city and small town, have to say then.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I want to thank the members for Beach—East York, Oak Ridges—Markham, Welland, and, of course, my colleague from Leeds—Grenville.

Listen, I would first say this: The member from Oak Ridges—Markham said that we have the most and best protected water anywhere. I would ask this House and ask her, how many of those 350 regulations have you read? How do you know if it's protected or not? Because I can be absolutely sure the member has not read all 350 pieces of legislation. I don't know if she's read Bill 72. But what we can see is that Premier Dad has told all his members not to speak to Bill 72, right? Nobody's allowed to speak to Bill 72. They've missed a couple of rotations now. There is one member who is allowed to speak, the member for Oak Ridges—Markham. Everybody else, it's—what's that movie? Youse Be Quiet I think is the name of that movie, that Premier Dad has told them all to do.

We can see and we can judge by their actions. This Liberal government has advanced a bill, but they are too fearful and two cowardly even to get up and speak to it. They won't speak to their own bill. Now, just how important is a bill, a piece of legislation that not one of them has the you-know-what to stand up and speak to it? Premier Dad has sent them all to their—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I remind the member to refer to the person by the title or the riding.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you. The Premier has sent them all away, no more speaking.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It is a privilege to stand and to speak to this bill, the Water Opportunities Act. I want to preface the remarks, my 20 minutes, by saying how glad I am to be back here and how I am glad on this very first bill that I've had the opportunity to debate since coming back that I will be supporting it, at least to send it to committee.

I think it's absolutely essential that we hear from two groups in particular. The first is the municipalities of the province of Ontario, all 444 of them, which I am sure are

going to have much to say about this bill and amendments to be made in order to make sure it works for them. They need to be there to talk about the cost that may accrue to them if the bill is passed as it currently exists and whether or not they are going to be capable of and able to carry out what is contained within the body of the bill.

The second group I particularly want to hear from is the First Nations communities, particularly those in Treaty 9 areas and Treaty 3 areas in northern Ontario, because it is those communities particularly that, over the course of time, suffer from unclear, unsafe drinking water. They do not have the wherewithal or the abilities to make sure that they themselves and their children have the kind of safe drinking water that we here in Ontario and we here in Toronto absolutely take for granted.

This glass in my hand here—and I don't want to use a prop—this is some of the safest drinking water in the entire world. When I was on Metro council as a mayor, we were proud of the fact that the water that came out of the taps in Toronto was unquestionably safer than almost everything that you could buy in a bottle in any store in Ontario, no matter whether it came from Ontario, the United States, Europe or Fiji. You've all seen those Fiji glasses and bottles. This water is safer. It is tested every hour on the hour and is the safest water possibly in the entire world that people can drink.

That is not true elsewhere in Ontario, and it's not true in spite of the fact that we have the Ontario Water Resources Act and the Environmental Protection Act, which are both very good acts and which would protect the citizens of Ontario if they were enforced more rigorously. I think the first thing that this Legislature has to do is pass the necessary funds or, even if funding is not necessary, empower the bureaucracy to go out there and enforce those acts to the maximum. That's the first thing we need to do to protect our drinking water.

The second thing I would say unequivocally is that the provisions of this act are meaningless, the act that we're debating here today, without cleaner water in the first place, without better fish habitats, without swimmable beaches and without safer drinking water. If we don't have all of those things above, then why would we need a Water Opportunities Act? We need to make sure that what we have, we're doing right and we're doing correctly. Today, a lot has been said about municipalities by my colleagues and even by me in giving my two-minute hits. I'm going to leave that to the end of my speech if there's time, because today I really want to talk about our First Nations communities.

You know I am from Beaches–East York. You know, every member of this Legislature, and probably almost everyone watching television, that this is in the downtown core of the present city of Toronto. You know that this is a very urban place. It's only five kilometres from this building, the start of Beaches–East York. And you know that we, as I have said, pride ourselves on the water that we have.

But what about First Nations communities? This is a government bringing forth this bill, and this government needs to know, from your own statistics, and I've heard some quoted today, that between 2006 and 2008—three years to five years after the McGuinty government was first sworn into office—there were 679 boil-water alerts and that Ontario led every other province in boil-water alerts. That's our province. That's what we have. That's the legacy. That's the legacy of this government. One cannot be proud that we had 679 boil-water alerts in those three years. That is tantamount to one for every two municipalities in this province—one for every two, every year. In that same time, eight out of 21 of Health Canada's high-risk systems are in Ontario. They're First Nations communities in Ontario. Eight out of 21 high-risk water systems are in this province.

1710

The former Minister of the Environment had this to say about his bill before it was actually brought forward to the House, and I think he was right. I want to quote him, because I think we need to follow what he had to say. Former Ontario Environment Minister John Gerretsen said that First Nations issues were amongst his concerns when drafting the soon-to-be-released Water Opportunities Act, and I quote Mr. Gerretsen: "It would not be right for Ontario to export our tremendous technology without first making sure that our people, including First Nations, have the best protection when it comes to the quality of their water." That's what he said, and he's right.

We need to make sure that the technology that we have is used and utilized in Ontario before we are going out to the world to sell what we have. Anyone in the world would say, "If you have this technology, why aren't you using it yourself? If you have this technology, why are the people in Kashechewan breaking out in sores from drinking the water? If you have this technology, why are there 679 boil-water alerts?" I know that if I was in some country that was looking at the technology from Ontario, I would be asking those questions, and I think the government needs to make sure that we not go off trying to sell the technology that we are not proud to use ourselves. We need to go out there and say to the world that there are no boil-water alerts in Ontario, that there are no First Nations communities at risk, that the technology we have we're proud of and we use it, and that the technology we have is made in Ontario and that every municipality, all 444 of them, and every single First Nations community has it too.

I think what Mr. Gerretsen had to say as minister when the bill was brought in was right. And I go on. I go on to talk about Kashechewan. Some of you in this room, I know, have been there. I'm sure that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has been there. I'm sure that the Minister of Natural Resources has been there. I'm sure that a great many members of the Legislature have been there. I went with some of them myself on a tour when we were discussing a bill put forward by my colleague Gilles Bisson about revenue resources. One of the stops we made was in that place.

It is almost an idyllic place, save and except that it's constantly at risk of flood. If you go there, you will see it's surrounded by lakes and rivers and streams and muskeg and, if you go there in the winter, by snow and ice. There is so much water around Kashechewan. In fact, there is so much water around all of these northern communities, that's the thing that you're struck with: the absolute, total abundance of water. And yet the water to drink is unsafe.

People live by the river, and the river, as I've said, constantly floods, as it does in most of those communities, especially in the springtime. Members who have been around the Legislature or here in the last Parliament will remember that there was quite a debate that went on around the people of Kashechewan and bringing them out of that community and finding them somewhere safe to live in Timmins while we tried to resolve the problems.

When I was there on one occasion with my colleague Gilles Bisson—I do travel with him from time to time through his riding when I get the opportunity—we went into Kashechewan and we went into the water treatment plant because it was unsafe and because people were getting sick from drinking the water. And I will never forget my colleague Gilles Bisson, the member from Timmins—James Bay, confronting the employee of that water plant because the water was absolutely unsafe. It went through a whole bunch of tubes and there were chemicals added to it and there was a whole bunch of scientific things that I as an engineer did not understand, but in the end the water that came out of the tap went to people's houses. And Mr. Bisson did something that I thought was absolutely brave. He took a glass of the water, and he took a second glass of the water. He held up the glass in one hand, and he gave the other glass to the employee. He said to the employee, "Is this water safe to drink?" The employee said, "Yes, it is." Bisson said, "You drink that glass of water, and then I'll drink mine." Do you know, the employee would not drink the water that he was producing and sending into people's houses? He would not drink that water. Of course, Gilles Bisson didn't have to drink the water, and I mercifully did not drink the water either, not without boiling it. That's the story of those First Nations communities. I never forgot what happened that day.

How can we, as a province, pass a bill like this with a straight face and say that we want to export our technology when we have places in this province that don't have access to it?

Mr. Gerretsen, to quote him again: "It would not be right for Ontario to export our tremendous technology without first making sure that our people, including First Nations, have the best protection when it comes to the quality of their water."

That's what I'm asking this government to do. I'm asking for somebody, I hope, to stand up after me and say, "Yes, we want this bill passed. Yes, we're sending it to committee. Yes, we commit ourselves absolutely to making sure that that technology goes to every single

community, especially the First Nations communities in northern Ontario, so that they never again have boil-water alerts, so that we never again have to airlift them to Timmins and put them in hotels so they can be safe, so that they never again have to be confronted, forced and challenged to drink the water that they produce."

I think that's what we need to do. I'm hoping a Liberal will stand up and say that that's part of this plan, because if it's part of this plan, then it's a good plan. If it's not part of this plan, who are we fooling? What place, what country, what city in the world wants to take our technology when we don't use it ourselves?

What is true of First Nations is also true of many of the smaller remote, rural and northern communities of this province. The boil-water alerts may not be as frequent, the problems may not be as severe in some cases, but they are there nonetheless. The cost to these smaller communities can be prohibitive. It costs a lot of money to put in a new facility. It costs a lot of money that they don't have.

I need to hear from a government member where the money is going to come from for the municipalities. I need somebody to stand up in this House and explain it today, preferably. If nobody is going to stand up and explain it today, at least make sure that somebody is there with the facts and figures when I'm sure that these remote and northern communities come forward in committee to talk about the costs to them.

In discussing this issue with people at the AMO conference—and I was there, going around and talking to people from northern communities, rural communities, mayors, reeves and councillors. They're very worried about where they are going to find the infrastructure money to build what is necessary. They have roads, they have bridges that they're struggling to maintain. They have water systems that are antiquated and, in some cases, 100 years old. As the legislation gets passed, they need to know how they're going to be able to enforce it, how they're going to be able to do what is right. They all agree it's right, but how are they going to be able to do it? Many rural, remote northern communities, small ones across this province, are in pretty dire straits when it comes to money, when it comes to the tax base that is necessary to build and maintain what is necessary and what this law will enforce.

I'm asking you to think about them as you pass this. I'm asking you to think about where they're going to get the money and to listen to them about how it's all going to unfold. These same communities, most of them, have declining populations. You don't have to go into the Far North. Go into some places in Niagara region. Go into some places in Essex. Go into some places in eastern Ontario. Go into some places in central Ontario, where the towns are not as big today as they were 20 and 30 years ago. Go to Smiths Falls. Go to all of these smaller, rural towns and, in some cases, cities around Ontario and see that they are not expanding in size. There's no new subdivisions going in bringing extra wealth. It's difficult to attract industry. Sometimes the schools are closing. The tax base is getting smaller.

1720

We all know that in northern Ontario we had to pass a special bill in order to maintain the number of seats that the north has. We had to pass that bill and we voted for it. We had to because the population is declining, and because the population there is declining, so is the population of those towns and cities. How can you expect declining population with less jobs and less people and less resource base to pay? How can you expect them to pay when this is brought into effect? It is causing some degree of alienation across northern Ontario and also across parts of rural Ontario and less urban Ontario when bills like this are passed without the necessary revenues that go with them or the time frame.

Now, my friend from Ottawa stood and up he spoke about two things. He said that the government has given \$1.8 billion in grants since 2003, and I don't doubt that to be true. I know it's true. We've looked those up ourselves: \$1.8 billion in grants in the last seven and a half years. I'm not going to say that that's a bad thing. But what that works out to is less than \$15 per person per year for a water system. Let's talk about what this really is. That means every citizen of Ontario can expect that the Ontario government will give their municipality or the like \$15 per year per person to help maintain a water system. That's not very much; \$1.8 billion sounds like a lot of money, but it's not very much, when you're living in small-town Ontario and when they tell you it's going to cost half a million dollars to upgrade your water system to make sure it meets Ontario's standards and to make sure that the technology we have here in Ontario can be brought to use for them.

He also talked about the \$1.5 billion in loans that were given to municipalities. Again, I have to say that's not very much, but only those municipalities that can afford to pay them back took them. And I see my good friend there, Mr. Arthurs, a former mayor from Pickering, now from Pickering-Scarborough. He knows; he's nodding his head. Only those municipalities that can afford to pay the money back actually take it in loans.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: That's why they call it a loan.

Mr. Michael Prue: That's why they call them a loan, and he's right. But those municipalities that are not in the best financial shape don't take those. Those are the ones I'm most worried about, and those are the ones that this government needs to listen to when this comes to committee.

As was said by my colleague from Welland, I was a mayor, the mayor of East York. I prided myself and our council prided itself on trying to upgrade the water system in East York. We got our water from Metro because that's the way the system worked, but it was our responsibility to distribute it. We had an older community and it took us the entire time that I was on council, both as a councillor and as a mayor, redoing the streets one by one, lining the water systems to make sure that the leakage went down, fining the companies that were putting things into sewer systems. We had to raise the rates so that that the sewers and water would pay for

themselves. We raised the water rates. I'm proud to say that as mayor I never once raised the tax rate, but we did raise the water rates and we did it to try to conserve the water and to make sure that we could pay for the infrastructure as we went, and I think municipalities generally want to do that. So that kind of authority has to be given as well.

Last but not least, in 10 seconds I want to say again that we will be supporting this bill to send it to second reading, but please listen to the First Nations communities and the smaller rural and northern communities that come to depute.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: Thank you to the member from Beaches–East York for his comments on the bill. I was listening and taking some notes here. The Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act is a key part of our Open Ontario plan and will make Ontario a water technology leader. You spoke very eloquently about some of the concerns raised by municipalities.

In my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, the city of Kawartha Lakes—we've been holding consultations. The honourable member from Peterborough, Jeff Leal, attended, as well as our federal counterparts. The Trent Canal system runs through our ridings. Water is a very important part of what we do. And the colleges and Trent University are involved in this consultation piece as well, with the ultimate goal to create a water technology centre of excellence in the area where we can tap into the expertise of people like Dr. Brent Wootton, who has a tremendous project on using green methods of sewer treatment as well.

Yesterday someone suggested that 25% of the water in our municipal systems leaks out. So of what's measured coming in and what's measured going out, 25% of that water vanishes, which is a financial loss for the municipalities and something that needs to be addressed, because if they could recapture 25% of that and be paid for it, this would be a revenue generator for the municipalities. When I was inquiring about infrastructure projects that were taking place across the province and looking through the lists of what was being approved, there were a lot of roads paved, there were a lot of bridges built, there were a lot of hockey arenas applied for, but I can't recall seeing one municipality that applied to have their water systems repaired.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Another good presentation in this Ontario Legislature, and through this debate it does give us an awful lot of information to bring forward during committee hearings. I assume there's going to be some committee hearings. I regret the fact that over the last two days we've been actually getting very little information from the government. Right from the get-go they had an hour to present their case; I think they used perhaps 15 or 20 minutes. So I commend the third party and the opposition for using up their full time and presenting as

much information and as many ideas as possible as we work our way through this piece of legislation.

I do appreciate the presentation from the member from Beaches–East York. I'm a traditional guy. I worked in Toronto in the 1970s. To me it's the Beaches. I always thought there was more than one beach in Toronto.

The member made mention of Kashechewan and the predicament in so many native communities where, whether it's lack of training, even though our government did initiate the centre of excellence in Walkerton recommended by Justice O'Connor, whether it's lack of funding or lack of maintenance and knowledge of how to run the equipment in some of these communities—but the overall point is that these kinds of communities are caught with the inconsistencies of the myriad of legislation, not only in the provincial—there are many, many water bills, and there'll be one more by the time we're done with this—but the federal jurisdiction. Primarily, native communities are federal jurisdiction, as are the territories, and other issues, transboundary issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The people of Beaches–East York are incredibly fortunate to have Michael Prue as their representative here in the Legislature. He has demonstrated once again what it means to be a competent and quality MPP. He knows the issues, he addresses them in a forthright manner and he analyzes the issues with a view to ensuring that the best possible thing is being done for the people of Ontario here in this Legislature. That to me is what an MPP should be doing. And I contrast Mr. Prue today with Liberal members who just seem disinterested. They're here. I see them here. There's one, there's another, there's another, there's another over there. I see Mr. Delaney. I see Mr. Craitor, Niagara Falls. I see the member from Mississauga–Streetsville right up there.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I have to remind you that that is not part of the parliamentary procedure.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I wasn't going to say that they were absent, because that would be unparliamentary.

But I see any other number of members here, and—

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: What about me?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Of course, she's here; you can hear her. The audience knew you were here. They can hear you on my microphone. Do another one. Do another yell-out, Ms. Pupatello.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask you to make sure that your comments are consistent with the bill being discussed.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Besides, I should have referred to her as the Minister of Economic Development and Trade—

Interjection: Demure or demurrer?

Mr. Peter Kormos: —who is either demure or demurring.

But you heard Prue, and that's the way it should be done. Let's hear from some of these—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did listen intently to the member from Beaches–East York. He and I both share a common background in municipal politics. I do take a great interest in this piece of legislation. Just recently—and I invite the member, any time he'd like to join with me, to come to Trent University to see the great work that's now being done by the Worsfold Water Quality Centre at Trent University, looking into a number of issues and coming up with solutions that will be identified under the Water Opportunities Act.

I just want to take a moment, with the great assistance of my colleague the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: I invite the member from Beaches–East York to come with me on Friday when we'll make a major announcement at Siemens in Peterborough. They are a North American leader in manufacturing, designing and engineering technology in waste water treatment centres. They're going to take advantage of the Water Opportunities Act to expand their product line for North American delivery and increase their engineering capacity to develop these waste water treatment systems. One of the unique features about Siemens in Peterborough is they have also established a training centre for municipalities in Ontario that actually purchase their equipment, to come and do their training with that equipment so that they know first-hand how to deal with it.

He makes a good point about Kashechewan. We were particularly pleased to be one of the host communities for the residents of Kashechewan who came to Peterborough, and they certainly shared with us the fact that they had a water treatment system plant that, of course, wasn't upgraded, and they lacked the capacity to actually run that plant.

One of the things that we'll be looking at here under this act is the opportunity to take the expertise that is developed at Siemens in Peterborough and share that right across the province with every community.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): You have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the members from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Haldimand–Norfolk, Welland and Peterborough for their comments.

Yes, to the member from Peterborough, I may take you up on that opportunity—unfortunately, not Friday. You'll have to invite me back another day, but I may do that.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk raised the oft-quoted and thorny issue that First Nations communities are largely under federal jurisdiction. No one could deny that, under the British North America Act, that is in fact the case. However, other provinces have got around that. Other provinces, particularly Quebec, have recognized that the First Nations communities in those respective provinces are also citizens of those provinces.

I believe, and I think we should all believe, that First Nations peoples living in Ontario are Ontario citizens who should have the same benefits and privileges as every other Ontario citizen. Whether they come under federal jurisdiction or provincial jurisdiction, we need to ensure, as a provincial government, that they have the same rights, duties, obligations and privileges as every other citizen. That includes the right to safe drinking water, the same right that we would grant to any of our citizens under any of the laws of Ontario or any United Nations charter which Canada has signed.

Having said that, I think we have a responsibility to understand that some of the poorest and most isolated people in this province need special attention. That, I think, will start when we start listening to what they have to say, when we invite them to the committees and when we do the things that are necessary to include them in the full aspect of the life of Ontario.

This can continue with this bill, and I look forward to hearing what they have to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I should say that I am extremely pleased to be able to share my time with the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

The member for Beaches–East York talked, and I know he was very hopeful that we would hear a speaker from the government. Again, they have let their chance pass by. We're very pleased to be able to speak to Bill 72, the Water Opportunities Act.

I know that the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock had mentioned municipalities applying for infrastructure water systems. I'm very pleased to talk about one of those applications, because I was involved with that. As some of the members know, prior to my election in March, I was the chief administrative officer for a small rural municipality located in my riding. I was the former CAO of the township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands. I was appointed in early August 2009.

At the time, I had been a staffer with my predecessor, Mr. Runciman. I had dealt, obviously, as most MPP staffers do, with MPP liaisons through different ministries. I was out of Mr. Runciman's office, so I did have a couple of contacts with these MPP liaisons. I remember calling up one at the request of the mayor of the township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands, Frank Kinsella, and requesting a meeting with the Minister of the Environment at AMO.

The minister at the time was John Gerretsen. Now he's the Minister of Consumer Services. Certainly, the minister was known to me for many years. He was the former mayor of the city of Kingston. I was a former mayor of the city of Brockville.

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: Exactly; that's right. Both of us served on the board of directors of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

I must admit that the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound also was a former member of the AMO board and

AMO executive until he decided in 1990 to run for member of provincial Parliament. I want to congratulate him on his 20th anniversary. I'm sorry that we're now separated by a seat, but you were a great mentor to me when I was first in this House earlier this year.

Getting back to the meeting with the Minister of the Environment then, John Gerretsen: We were there to talk about the Lansdowne water system. Lansdowne is a small community in my riding of Leeds–Grenville, one of the villages that is in the township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands. They had an infrastructure project that the federal government, the province and the municipality cost-shared to install treatment barriers to the existing wells in the municipality, to provide new water metering for the homes and the businesses within Lansdowne, and to expand the treatment building proper.

The whole cost of the project was \$962,500, with each partner—the federal government, the province and the township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands—spending \$320,834. The important point is this: That community, that entire water system in Lansdowne, is 298 users. That's 298 users, including the businesses and the residences: an extremely small distribution system. When you look at the municipal share—and this is a municipal share; it's a local improvement—you're looking at \$320,834 between 298 users, over \$1,000 per user. That's an extremely large amount of money.

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The question we had asked the minister at that meeting at AMO was, how do municipalities support and sustain small water systems? A very, very valid point. If you look at that system, again, 298 users, and you compare—I live 20 minutes down the road from Lansdowne in the city of Brockville, where the minimum water bill is \$27.96 a month. The average bill in that community, in the city of Brockville, is between \$35 and \$40 per month. Madam Speaker, members of the Legislature, the minimum rate in that small 298 person and business system in Lansdowne: \$90 per month. That's the average bill people have in that community. There, you've got a very small system that the council and the corporation of the township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands felt needed to be fixed, felt needed to be sustained, and the cost was over \$1,000, in addition to the fact that the users were paying \$90 a month, three times what I pay 20 minutes down the road in a community with about 9,000 households. It just doesn't seem right.

We asked the minister whether there was any assistance for rural municipalities, whether there was any break rather than providing it as a local improvement, would the minister provide us with some suggestions? And he did. He provided us a suggestion—and his staff were there—that we pursue what was called hardship funding, where we could get 80% of our share. I'll tell you, Madam Speaker, as the brand new chief administrative officer, this was a great report that I could give to council, that the minister and his staff were referring us to a hardship program where we could help those 298 users up to 80%. It was wonderful news. There was much excitement within the community of Lansdowne.

So we went through the process and we found that we had to apply to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, because there was this joint committee, and the infrastructure—you know, the feds were involved, and we had to apply. Well, we applied. The community applied, the municipality applied, and it came back. It dealt with bureaucrats and it bounced back and forth to the committee and there were letters, but finally, the answer came back. Finally, the suggestion from the minister for that small community to go after hardship funding was finished: The answer was no. There was no hardship funding, there was no assistance, and that small water system again had a tough time in running. Again, there wasn't any advice on conservation. There wasn't any advice about technological improvements like we see here with Bill 72.

I wanted to make that a cautionary tale, so to speak, after I heard from some members talking about how municipalities didn't apply for water. There were municipalities that applied to upgrade their water systems. But again, it just shows that for the small, rural system, they've got it tough. It's tough to deal with all of the regulations. My friend the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington talked about 350 regulations, the hundreds and thousands of pages of documentation that this government has laid out for municipalities and individuals. It's staggering.

I want to talk about this bill. I know that in my previous couple of hits, I talked about the fact that this government loves to make green headlines and they love to make announcements. Back in May, when they announced this piece of legislation, there wasn't any debate, there wasn't any discussion here on the floor. There's hardly any discussion here today. Other than a couple of members here and there with two-minute hits, we haven't heard from the government. You missed a great opportunity again. You talk about your agenda or other people's agendas. You could have talked about your agenda today. You could have talked about how you were going to engage municipalities. You could have talked about all of the good that you think you're going to bring with stakeholders into this process, but you sat in your place and said nothing. I just can't believe that.

As I said earlier, I was elected in March. I was sworn in here on March 22. I'll tell you something, Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate the work that my caucus members do every day. They're great people to help me as a new member in the Legislative Assembly. I can tell you this: On this side of the House we certainly, from what I have known and from what I have talked about with my members, support clean water and the promotion of clean water technology. I think that's a given on this side of the House, but you know what worries us? We worry that there is some form of hidden price tag for whatever reason. We've seen it today with the lack of discussion on that side of the House. We just feel that they're hiding something. Why aren't you standing up and talking about this bill? Why aren't you standing up and talking about how you're going to engage municipalities? I was the one who mentioned AMO, and I

know other members have as well, because they have that municipal experience, yet the members opposite are silent.

As well, they're silent on the fact that we see that this bill actually does little to promote conservation and technology other than those existing regulations and government initiatives that some members have talked about. This would have been a great opportunity for you to talk about how this promotes conservation and technology.

As well, previous speakers have talked about the fact that there's another government agency that's being created in this case, the Water Technology Acceleration Project. Again, the thing that I have to question is this government's record with agencies. This is the same government that wasted \$1 billion with eHealth and had little or nothing to show for it. My colleague the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington talked about the local health integration networks that are unaccountable, unelected and largely anonymous in communities. I can tell you that Tim Hudak and the PC caucus would put money into front-line health care.

This government wants to create a new agency. Look at some of the agencies that they've been dealing with right now. OLG, for example, where you had executives charge meals, booze and gym memberships, and they failed to protect people with their lottery winnings. In the midst of a financial crisis with the Big Three, what did OLG do? They had a contest, giving away Mercedes. This government's record with agencies is dismal. This government was so desperate for money, the Minister of Finance mused about selling off OLG, LCBO and parts of OPG, and even paid consultants to look at that, only to retreat. That's some of this government's record when it comes to existing agencies, let alone creating a new agency. It's really quite shocking.

I know it would be unparliamentary to mention people's absences, so I won't. But I can't believe that we haven't heard more from this government and the minister on what the price tag will be of this legislation, and I just cannot believe that we haven't talked more about the plans that the government has for Bill 72.

Again, they made great fanfare when it came to the 10th anniversary of Walkerton. They make this great announcement, and then nothing—no debate, nothing for months. When Earth Day rolls around and it's the 40th anniversary, they trumpet another act on waste diversion—yet again, nothing. You know when we hear from them? We hear from constituents on July 2 when they walk into Home Hardwares and Canadian Tires and see this eco tax on their bills. And then the government says, "We're going to review it in 90 days." They announced that on July 20, so I look forward to October 20, to all the wonderful decisions that the government has.

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I, again, am very pleased to share my time with the very distinguished and learned member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I'm so happy to speak about this bill, but again, too, I'm here—I've come here to listen to the government tell me how wonderful this bill is. We talk about it in caucus; we don't like it, so there must be somebody that likes it over there. Where are the rural members and our northern members?

This, again, is a big-city bill. Cities have money; they're going to be okay. But you get into our little municipalities, they don't have that kind of money. You guys are forcing it on them. Where are the rural guys? Where are they? Are there any rural members left over in that caucus? Or from the north? What are our northern members doing over there? They're sitting over there on their butts. They won't get up and talk about this. This is terrible.

The Speaker today said that this was a place for debate. Well, how are we going to debate between us and the third party? We're on the same side over here, guys, so you should be telling us why this is so great for our local municipalities. What happened to you guys over there? You can all play with your BlackBerrys and your phones—look at them up there. The BlackBerrys are out—"Oh, I don't want them to see me." Don't worry, the camera's over here, guys. Nobody will see you over there. But where are you? Where are those northern members? They're always in here saying, "We can't do this for the north"—you're not doing this for the north. And the rural members are not here. Or if they're here, they're not up saying something. They had all kinds of time to debate this bill. Now it's going to run out. I would hope that in committee or wherever you send this bill, you get off your butts and go out there and tell us how wonderful this bill is.

I want to read you something here. This comes from a small rural municipality. Listen to this, because you're going to have to understand this, fellas. You've been here. This letter was sent to John Wilkinson. You'll all know who he is; he's the Minister of the Environment. Behold him. It's about the Water Opportunities Act and Bill 13, the sustainable water and waste water systems act. The council of the township of Georgian Bluffs—this is just outside of Owen Sound, if you wanted to know where it was—at their committee of the whole meeting on Wednesday, September 8, 2010, received a report from the CAO, Bill White, dated August 17, 2010, regarding the Water Opportunities Act and Bill 13. The township of Georgian Bluffs provides the following comments. I want you to listen to this:

"1. Provincial drinking water quality standards through the Safe Drinking Water Act, and Regulation 453/07, source water protection legislation, and other existing inspection and accountability procedures through the Ministry of the Environment sufficiently protect the safety and efficiency of small municipal water systems without the need for new legislation." That's coming from a small municipality.

"2. If the Water Opportunities Act and ... Bill 13, the sustainable water and waste water systems act are approved and new obligations placed on municipalities

operating small water systems, then sustainable funding and support should be provided to assist in compliance without impacting water users." That's what they're asking you for. But you guys didn't stand up and tell us anything about this, so we don't know what the heck you're up to over there.

"3. That the province not set up unnecessary regulatory boards or bureaucracies in support of new water legislation, and that the role of the Walkerton Clean Water Centre be explored further with a view to using this existing agency to champion water conservation technology with business and universities.

"Your truly

"Bruce Hoffman

"Township clerk."

Now, that's what the small, rural municipalities are telling you guys—there's the letter right there—and the ones from the north. When we get letters like this, I think, "Well, I'll be here this afternoon. I'll find out what the rural and northern members over there in the Liberal Party will have to tell us about this bill and how they would respond to this letter." What did we hear? Nothing, not a thing from you guys over there. You did a couple of two-minute hits and you were mumbling something about that the minister was going to come to your riding and make a big announcement. She came to my riding too, but she forgot to tell me she was coming. So you were lucky on that one. The same minister is going to come down to yours and you know a week ahead of time. For some reason, I didn't get told she was coming. It would have been nice to be there.

But anyway, that's all we heard from you—nothing on this, nothing on this bill, not a damn thing. You people over there have gone to sleep.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I enjoyed the incredibly competent comments of the member for Leeds–Grenville, who is demonstrating himself a worthy successor to Bob Runciman. Of course, while listening to Mr. Clark, I was waiting anxiously for Bill Murdoch of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who brings passion and heartfelt emotion to this debate in his unique style. I find the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to be a delight today, as he has been on each and every occasion that I've listened to him take the floor in this Legislature. By the time he's finished, the government doesn't know whether it's been drilled, punched or bored. He tore a strip off of them today, all right.

He came here from the real Ontario, the hard-working Ontario, the Ontario with a little bit of dirt under the fingernails, not soft hands like a baby's bum, but with calluses on their hands. The communities that he's talking about are hard-working Ontario, a whole lot of them farming Ontario. They grow our beef and other crops.

But the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound spoke effectively on behalf of small-town Ontario. Just as I have concerns about Welland and Thorold and Port

Colborne and their ability, their capacity—and Wainfleet, poor little Wainfleet, a beautiful little rural community. My concerns are underscored by the articulate comments today by the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I can only hope that his successor can muster up the same level of passion, interest, vitality and enthusiasm for the people of her or his riding once they are elected.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: As a member who represents probably—well, not probably; I represent more coastline on the Great Lakes than any member in the Legislature, and I also represent quite a number of small communities. As a matter of fact, I represent 37 municipalities in the 86,000 square kilometres that we're proud to call Algoma–Manitoulin. My communities would be happy to support this legislation. They understand—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: No, no. My good friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound chuckles. He knows that people in rural areas expect to have the opportunities to create a better economy that other people have in this province. What this act is about is selling and further developing the technologies that we have in Ontario across the world, to those places in the world that need the kind of technology that we have developed and will develop in a province that values our most valuable resource, I would argue, and that is our water.

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It is true that many of our small communities have, more than maybe the larger centres, problems with financing small systems. That is where, in northern Ontario, when the capital projects rolled out—and we had 12 or 13 of them in my constituency—to improve our water treatment plants, the province of Ontario, through the NOHFC, paid half of the province's share, which made the capital costs of water much more affordable for our small communities.

So I don't share the views of my friends from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and Leeds–Grenville.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: We've just heard two more good speeches, some new information and some ideas. All I hear across the way are some two-minute hits. I haven't heard any speeches from the governing Liberals yet on this debate this afternoon.

I appreciate the remarks, member from Leeds–Grenville and, of course, member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. We are receiving input from other stakeholders. I think this fills the gap that we're seeing from no input from the government members.

I was copied a brief from Ecojustice—material they sent into the registry. I also got the package from the Canadian Petroleum Products Institute; it was a submission they made to the Environmental Bill of Rights registry, and they questioned whether this legislation is needed. I just heard it mentioned in the House here: Do you need legislation to foster technology, innovation and

technological development? The Canadian petroleum producers—this was in an earlier submission—provided quite a bit of input. They understand the priority for developing the technology, and, as they say, "We believe existing water regulations and water management initiatives in Ontario could be used to enhance and to achieve the goals of sustainable water resources management." They feel the existing legislation, existing regulations, are there and could do the job. What they're very concerned about is one more provincial law. They're concerned about duplication. They're concerned about inconsistencies. They're concerned about the kind of fragmentation that we see negatively impacts so many of the smaller communities and the native communities. That's one problem with fragmentation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, again, to two very good speeches from the member from Leeds–Grenville and from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

I want to turn my attention mostly to what the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound had to say because I remember that just before we went away for the summer hiatus he made quite a name for himself around Ontario, calling for a new province of Toronto. He was talking about the great divide between the province outside of Toronto and the province inside of Toronto. I listened to him today as he was speaking about what he has heard in this Legislature—nothing from the government side, but he did hear from New Democrats and he did hear from the Conservatives, and I'm just wondering, perhaps, in his two-minute comment if he would say whether he still believes this is an idea. Maybe we should have one province for New Democrats and Conservatives and perhaps another place for Liberals, because they seem to be in a different province of themselves. They don't seem to want to dialogue in this House. Perhaps he has rethought what he was saying before.

Having said that, I want to commend him as well for bringing up the concerns of small rural municipalities. He quoted one at great length. He had a report from them. Their concerns I do not believe have been adequately thought through, to this stage in time. He is correct in bringing them up, and I would hope that he will, in his two minutes, say something about how he hopes to bring this up in committee.

To close, I am hoping against hope, because we obviously have run out of time today, that some Liberal, in the next day or two, when this gets reordered, will be brave enough to stand up, because it will be their turn next.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Leeds–Grenville—

Mr. Steve Clark: Madam Speaker, I'll refer it to my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All right. The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I want to thank all the speakers that spoke for the two minutes. We don't have a long time in two minutes; I was going to name them all, but they know who they are. They stood up, and I appreciate what they said. And I really appreciated that somebody from the north woke up over there. Golly, one of them got up and said something. That was really super. I think we should give them a round of applause.

Applause.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: The only thing he said, though—he said he had some 35 small communities and they wouldn't agree with us. Well, how come this community wrote this? I did not write that. That came from a small community, pleading with you guys—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Now I hear another rural member wake up. Holy cow, guys, it's 6 o'clock, time for supper. They woke up. Isn't that something for you guys to wake up at 6 o'clock? Where have you been all day? We've been waiting for you to tell us what's good about this bill, but you won't tell us because there isn't anything good about it.

We don't need another one. We don't need another bill. You already have enough. You say that they will

appreciate this bill because they're going to get some money out of it. Well, golly, guys, you've given all the money away. You've already spent \$20 billion we didn't have. How are you going to give them more money? They can get money out of those other acts.

I certainly appreciated that my friend from Manitoulin Island woke up over there, got going, and maybe you can go to caucus now and say, "Guys, this isn't any good for us in the north. This isn't any good for us in rural Ontario." Maybe you'll go and tell them, because maybe we're going to have to get rid of Toronto yet and have them make their own province. I haven't given up on that because that is where this mentality comes from. All these people who live in the big city don't worry about this, but when you get out in rural Ontario we don't have that money to do this. We have little wee systems, and you don't need a whole bunch more rules for us to live under. You've already got some 500,000 of them now, and we don't need anymore.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1807.

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Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

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Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
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No. 43

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament



**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 15 September 2010

Mercredi 15 septembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 15 September 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 15 septembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Baha'i prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY TAX CREDIT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR LES ACTIVITÉS DES ENFANTS

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit / Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour les activités des enfants.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Kitchener—Conestoga.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Kitchener—Conestoga.

Applause.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Thank you to my colleagues. I'm very excited this morning to be here in the House for second reading of the Children's Activity Tax Credit Act, 2010. This proposed act contains amendments to the Taxation Act, 2007, to implement a new, permanent and refundable tax credit for Ontario families.

The McGuinty government remains committed to enhancing existing services and introducing new and innovative initiatives to create measurable improvements in people's lives right here in Ontario. Of particular focus for our government has been improving opportunities for Ontario's children and Ontario's youth. I'm pleased to stand here to highlight a few of our accomplishments over the past seven years.

In 2009-10, we significantly reduced class sizes; I say that with ultimate pride as an educator and as a parent. All primary classes in Ontario have 23 or fewer students, and 90.5% of these classes have 20 or fewer students.

In 2009-10, 68% of grade 3 and grade 6 students met or exceeded the provincial standards in reading, writing and math. This is a 14% increase since 2002-03.

In 2008-09, 79% of students in Ontario graduated with a high school diploma. This means that more than 52,500 additional students have graduated from high school since 2003-04.

But we also know that learning takes place outside the classroom. A 2008 study conducted by Statistics Canada concluded: "Children's participation in organized extra-curricular activities has been associated with positive short- and long-term outcomes, such as academic achievement and pro-social behaviours, and with reduced negative outcomes, such as dropping out of school and emotional and behavioural disorders."

This is why the McGuinty government is proposing a new, permanent and refundable tax credit that would help ensure a healthy and active lifestyle for our young people. It makes it a little easier for parents to get their children involved in sports, arts and other activities. We know that that is absolutely crucial and so important to their development.

Under our proposed tax credit, parents would be able to claim up to \$500 of eligible expenses per child. They would receive a refundable tax credit worth up to \$50 per child and \$100 per child with a disability.

The 2008 Statistics Canada study also concluded that children from lower income homes were less likely to participate in extracurricular activities. Unlike the federal government's children's fitness tax credit and similar other tax credits in provinces, our tax credit would be fully refundable. This means that low-income parents who pay little or no income tax will also benefit. Also unique to our tax credit, the maximum amount of tax credit would be indexed for 2011 and subsequent years under section 23 to ensure that the tax credit, of course, keeps pace with inflation.

Furthermore, our proposed tax credit covers a wide, wide scope of activities, far more comprehensive than the federal children's fitness tax credit. The Ontario tax credit would cover activities that fall into two categories, fitness and non-fitness—this is quite significant. I will go through the two categories. All eligible activities would be supervised and suitable for children—again, fitness activities and non-fitness activities, which is absolutely crucial to parents such as myself who have three boys in soccer and rowing, who need to be involved in those fitness activities, and then, of course, non-fitness activities for those like myself; I was part of the debating club and public speaking. This will also benefit non-fitness activities.

0910

The criteria for fitness activities would be the same as for the federal children's fitness tax credit. The activities

would require a significant amount of physical activity that contributes to cardio-respiratory endurance plus one or more of muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility and balance.

For non-fitness activities to be eligible, they would have to fall under one of the following categories. I'm going to go through the categories, as this is so exciting for the non-fitness side of this tax credit: instruction in music, dramatic arts, dance and visual arts; language instruction; activities with a substantial focus on wilderness and the natural environment; activities with a substantial focus on helping children develop and use their intellectual skills; structured interaction among children where a supervisor teaches or helps children develop interpersonal skills so important to their existence in society today; or enrichment or tutoring in academic subjects.

For both fitness and non-fitness activities, programs would qualify as eligible programs if they conform to one of the following guidelines. I'll just go through the guidelines:

- a weekly program, not part of a school's curriculum, of a duration of eight or more consecutive weeks, in which all or substantially all the activities include a significant amount of qualifying activity;

- a program that is not part of a school's curriculum, of a duration of five or more consecutive days, of which more than 50% of the daily activity includes a significant amount of qualifying activity;

- a program that is not part of a school's curriculum, of a duration of eight or more consecutive weeks, offered to children by a club, association or any similar organization, in circumstances where the participants in the program may select a variety of activities, if more than 50% of the activities offered to children by the organization include a significant amount of qualifying activity, or more than 50% of the time scheduled for the activities offered to children in the program is scheduled with activities that include a significant amount of qualifying activity; and

- a membership in an organization that, again, is not part of a school's curriculum, of a duration of eight or more consecutive weeks, if more than 50% of the activity offered to children by the organization includes a significant amount of the qualifying activity.

If certain programs or memberships of a duration of eight or more consecutive weeks fail to qualify because 50% or fewer of the activities that are offered to children are eligible activities, then a proportional amount of the fees paid for that program or membership could qualify for the credit as well.

This tax credit would build on the significant measures we've already taken to support children's activities. Some of these significant steps include the after-school initiative, which I'm personally familiar with. This initiative provides youth in high-risk communities with after school programming. Programs in this particular initiative include healthy eating and nutrition education, which of course is always helpful in working to combat childhood obesity; physical activity to encourage active lifestyle;

personal health and wellness education, of course to promote self-esteem in our youth; and other activities with specific priorities that are based on local community needs.

Under an agreement between the government of Canada and the government of Ontario to fund sports programs for Ontario with a particular emphasis on enhancing opportunities for young people, aboriginal Canadians and people at risk, the government of Canada and the Ontario government are each contributing \$2.65 million, for a total of \$5.3 million over three years. Funding will go to projects such as the Track and Field Fitness project, which provides organized activity sessions for over 10,000 aboriginal children and young people in 60 First Nations communities. The Bridging the Gap Through School Sport project offers leadership training for senior students in the phys ed leadership course. The Sports Camps for Kids initiative helps Boys and Girls Clubs across Ontario to offer customized sports camps to over 5,000 children and young people at risk.

There has been \$4.5 million since 2006 under the Ontario international amateur sport hosting policy in a number of events, including the 2007 FIFA under-20 World Cup of soccer, the 2009 World Junior Hockey Championship, the 2009 World Wushu Championships and the 2010 International University Sports Federation's world university cross-country championship.

This is so important to our youth. From a personal perspective, our boys were at the 2007 FIFA under-20 soccer championships, and the way that these events affect their lives and create their encouragement, their interest and their desire to be a part of physical activity is absolutely immeasurable. So these are great steps that our government is taking.

The healthy communities fund is a one-window approach to funding local organizations for the delivery of health promotion initiatives. These would be initiatives that are related to physical activity, recreation, sport, healthy eating, injury prevention, substance and alcohol misuse and, of course, mental health. The healthy communities fund has provided an estimated \$21.9 million to 369 organizations across Ontario to deliver innovative health promotion programs. An educated and a healthy population, as we all know, is critical to the prosperity of Ontario. Our government believes in starting this lifelong process as early as we possibly can.

In addition to announcing the proposed new children's activity tax credit this month, September also marks the initial phase of implementing to make full-day learning available for four- and five-year-olds across the province of Ontario. Full-day kindergarten provides children with the foundation, the base, that they need for learning for a lifetime. It supports student achievement. It builds on the success that we've already achieved, as I earlier mentioned, in the lower primary class sizes and of course in the increase in the graduation rates. It's also a positive step towards supporting our province and the people of Ontario for the long term.

In the report Ontario in the Creative Age, Roger Martin and Richard Florida recommend: "Make early

childhood development a high priority.” This is the highest-payoff investment we can make in our long-run prosperity.

Nearly 600 Ontario schools currently offer full-day kindergarten, and it will be offered in more than 800 schools in September 2011. Our government’s goal is to have full-day kindergarten fully implemented in all Ontario elementary schools by 2015-16. This will employ up to an additional 3,800 teachers and 20,000 early childhood educators, and will benefit about 247,000 children in Ontario. This initiative will help to ensure that working parents continue to have access to quality child care and play an active, active role in the workforce.

Earlier this year, our government announced that it’s stepping in to permanently fill the gap left by the federal government with an investment of \$63.5 million a year to preserve 8,500 child care spaces, and this is just another example of the investments that our government is making to support the very foundation of our Open Ontario plan—and, of course, that’s Ontario’s people.

The McGuinty government remains committed to our Open Ontario plan, which we introduced last March. The Open Ontario plan lays the foundation of our government’s strategy to position the province for new opportunities, new jobs and, of course, new economic growth. It’s about reassessing how Ontario does business and how Ontario can best prepare for the times ahead. It’s about maximizing existing resources, consisting of people, programs and processes, to the best that they can be as the economic recovery takes hold. It’s about strengthening our province now as well as in the future.

0920

Ontario’s children, as we know, are Ontario’s future. I always say that Ontario’s future walks through the doors of our schools every day. An important part of our Open Ontario plan is about helping kids reach their full potential. With the proposed new tax credit, our government would be putting more money back into the pockets of moms and dads to help them provide their children with the kinds of activities that interest them the most.

We’ve gone through all the activities; we know that it covers a wide range of interests, and now moms and dads are going to have the opportunity to support their children with those interests. It’s the right thing to do for our kids, it’s the right thing to do for our economy and it’s the right thing to do for our communities. By helping to develop skills, fitness and, of course, the interests of children and youth of today, the government, as we said, is supporting a better future for all of us in Ontario.

In conclusion, the children’s activity tax credit would provide about \$75 million each year to assist with the cost of enrolling children in extracurricular activities and would benefit over 1.8 million children in about 1.1 million Ontario families. Parents want to make sure their children have the opportunities that they need to grow up strong and secure, and to become happy, caring and productive citizens of Ontario’s society. We need our students as well as our youth to become engaged citizens, to become part of Ontario’s future.

Our proposed new tax credit would make it just a little easier for parents to provide their children with these opportunities. That’s why I ask for the support of the House in passing this act to help Ontario families and Ontario parents, and to make it just that much easier to support their children to take these activities and to be involved in fitness and non-fitness activities, because it’s the right thing to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for York–Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I’ll defer to John O’Toole.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Just one second. Can it be deferred to a—?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Okay. The member for Durham.

Mr. John O’Toole: I just want to respond to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga and comment. First of all, we recognize the importance of making sure that all children have the opportunity to pursue extracurricular activities, and I think it is a very good sort of signal or recognition of the good work that the federal government of Stephen Harper is doing with his tax credit. I think that imitation is probably the finest form of flattery.

But the point here is, I’m a little concerned. First of all, if you look at it, it’s a very small, innocuous little bill. In the bill, it’s very specific that, first of all, you have to spend \$500. So families that are registering their children for hockey—let’s go through that for a moment, in the little time I have. The \$500, it would never be exactly \$500; it could be \$550 or \$600, and then there’d be tax on that. That’s 13% tax on this. Let’s just do the simple math. If it’s \$500 and it’s 10%, that’s \$50 tax; it’s actually more than that. We’re concerned about this as an action of the provincial government. For them to issue a cheque for \$50, it would probably cost \$50.

Interjection.

Mr. John O’Toole: Twenty-five dollars. Well, I think there is going to be a direct cheque because with the last cheque they got for the HST implementation, the cheque came out and had a nice letter from Premier McGuinty, sort of patting himself on the back. So this is another government opportunity to get into the mailbox, and you are paying for it. You, the consumer, are actually paying for it. It’s your own money coming back to you. It’s an admission that the HST is a tax grab, and so—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I’d just like to say that this tax credit—any help for families is good. Unfortunately, the \$50, let’s take a look at that: If I had a boy in hockey or a girl in hockey, that might pay for 10 skate sharpenings. And then I’ve got to pay HST on top of that so I’ll be lucky if I get five skate sharpenings. Some of the places it costs \$180 just to register—just to register. Even baseball, you’ve got to pay for your uniform; you’ve got to pay for the registry.

This is a joke. This money will do absolutely nothing to help families.

Let's talk about piano lessons: average \$60 an hour; \$60 an hour, and you might go twice a week, maybe once a week to piano lessons. Wow: \$50. If you break that down over a year, it works out to be about 29 cents.

Every time the Liberals do something it's half done or a quarter done, and they put us in a position where we don't want to go against people getting money, but they fall short every time. They don't make it to second base, let alone home plate. This is absolutely a joke. It's peanuts. And they are going to get it back in HST. An average family, a family of four, is going to pay \$1,800 in the first two years of HST implementation, and they're going to send them a cheque for \$900. The people of Ontario aren't stupid. They've caught on to this, and at every door I've gone to, the people are ticked off.

So, once again, a nice present with a big bow on it that's not worth the paper it's written on.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to rise to speak to this particular piece of legislation. I just want to make a quick comment on something that the member from Durham just said a minute ago, that imitation is the highest sense of flattery. He thinks that copying the federal process was a good thing. The member needs to remember that not too long ago, we debated the tax reform and the HST, and that's something that was initiated by the same folks in Ottawa.

Let me talk about this particular piece of legislation. Yes, I heard from parents. I mean, I was a parent; I have nine grandkids, so I know what it takes to play hockey and soccer. But what I did hear, though, from those parents is: "Can you help us out a little bit?" They know that taxpayers' money needs to be spent wisely. "Can you help us out a little bit?" Because those families with those kids—I know what it costs to drive to hockey games and take your kids to practice.

I know that the folks I spoke to in my riding over the last week or so, when this announcement was made, are quite happy. Is there enough? I'm not sure what "enough" really is enough, but I know that they're very, very appreciative of at least the thought that we recognized, we listened, and we're now delivering.

The member from the NDP would say, "Well, this is nothing." Maybe \$50 to him is nothing, but I know to my daughter, to my son, to my grandkids, it is something. Yes, it doesn't pay the whole bill. No government ever paid for the whole bill. But anytime that we can help, I think it's something that we need to do, and keep our ears tuned to listen to other things that we can do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Burlington.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I guess when I heard this was happening, it was a clear admission, in my estimation, on the part of the government that the HST, in fact, was a mistake because you're having to fix things as you go along. The problem is you can't fix the whole problem unless you deal with it in a much bigger way. So a \$50 tax credit to a family, and the administration costs that

ensue—people are shaking their heads. They're saying, "What the heck is going on here? They're charging us hand over fist for things: more for energy, more for gas, more for hockey equipment, more for hockey registration, more for baseball registration, more for everything. And they're going to send us a cheque for \$50. Well, isn't that rich?" That's what people are saying to me. It's a joke.

0930

It's an absolute joke, and a clear admission that the HST was the wrong thing to do in the first place. If you're going to give a meaningful tax credit, I would herald it, but this \$50 is an insult to families who know that it costs you almost 50 bucks to send the cheque out.

People in Ontario have awakened. They have seen this government, continually over this term, not consult and institute higher costs in either taxes or fees without any consultation, and in most cases, with very little heads-up on what is going to happen and certainly no explanation. When a consultation is required and asked for by the people, it's denied. People won't look favourably on this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Kitchener—Conestoga, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'm really quite encouraged to respond to the comments we've heard here. I think the first response I'll make is that I am a parent, and I have three sons in sports, both physical and non-physical. I tell you first-hand, the testimony of this parent is that that makes a difference. Every little bit helps, and I tell you first-hand, it does make a difference.

The NDP and the PCs can sit in the House and call this a joke. That's absolutely unacceptable.

You know what they're calling a joke? Let me just tell you what they're calling a joke. They're calling \$75 million every year a joke. They're sitting there saying that about benefiting and helping over 1.8 million children in the province of Ontario.

This will help 1.1 million families in Ontario. This is something that the McGuinty government is doing. We're doing it now, and it is helping families. For the Conservatives and the NDP to sit in this House and call it a joke is absolutely shameful. The McGuinty government is helping families. We are doing it now. I'll tell you where we're doing it again—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, come to order.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: We're doing it in areas that have never been done before—fitness and non-fitness. Young people who are involved in music, dramatic arts, visual arts: They are now going to be supported. Students who need language instruction are now going to receive support so parents can put their children in the language instruction that they need. Developmental needs that are crucial to students in this province in order to be successful in the future: Parents are receiving that support from the McGuinty government so that these children can prosper and flourish.

This is no joke. This is a wonderful thing to do for the youth of the province of Ontario, and I'm proud to stand here and support this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity to debate Bill 99, which is An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit.

I note that the parliamentary assistant, the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, was quite far-ranging in her comments talking about this bill because Bill 99 is all of a few pages. It's very thin. I noted that the member was talking about, it seemed like, every program to do with families and children that the Liberal government has, including full-day learning in kindergarten etc. I'm just pointing that out for the Speaker in case my comments happen to cover more than this specific tiny bill before us.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Since the member has brought that up, that's a good point. I was listening, and I give members a little bit of latitude, but I like to hear them come back to the issue. That's my comment to you as well.

Mr. Norm Miller: I can say, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I shouldn't have brought that point up, then.

I will be sharing my time with the member from Durham, as well, because it is a fairly thin bill here.

I would like to comment that the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek did point out that it's only \$50, and he compared how many skate sharpenings that would pay for. I would simply say that, having played on the Legiskaters with the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, on the same line, I don't think it matters whether we have dull skates or sharp skates.

Now, back to the actual bill. I would simply say that, as the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek mentioned, this is like handing out crumbs when you've taken the whole loaf of bread from Ontario families. It's more about optics. It's certainly a small amount of money going back to Ontario families: \$50. I would say that for many families, they won't be able to afford to pay the \$500 to be able to get the \$50 back—it's a 10% tax credit—because so much has already been taken by the McGuinty government. I will go through some of the tax increases that are affecting Ontario families.

To begin with, let me just briefly go through the bill. It's fairly straightforward. You get a tax credit of up to \$50 by spending \$500 on certain approved sports programs that involve muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility or balance. That is modelled very much after the federal tax credit that is similar to this one—although the Ontario version also has other programs that qualify for the tax credit, and that's things like music, dramatic arts, dance, visual arts, language instruction, activities with a substantial focus on wilderness and the natural environment, activities with a substantial focus on helping children develop and use particular intellectual skills, structured interaction among children where super-

visors teach or help children develop interpersonal skills, or enrichment or tutoring in academic activities. It's \$50 based on spending \$500 for qualifying expenses and an additional \$50 for a disabled child, so the total would then be \$100 for two children, one being disabled. The tax refunds would come—I know this government likes to send cheques, and it would be administered by Revenue Canada, so it would come from the federal government.

I guess anything, even if it's crumbs coming back to Ontario families, is something that we would support. But as I will outline, Ontario families have been hit so hard that this will not make much difference for them. Fifty dollars is not going to go very far in terms of all the additional costs that Ontario families are facing.

That's more or less what the bill is about. It's pretty thin; it's pretty straightforward. Some of the eligible activities, just to expand on that a bit, are things like aerobics, Scouts or Cubs, cadets, badminton, chess, ball hockey or cooking for kids. There's actually a fairly long list of various qualifying activities that the Ontario government program is going to qualify for: Scouts, tennis—it goes on. However, as I say, our concern is that this is really a pittance. It's like taking a dollar and giving five cents back, except in the case of the McGuinty government, it's more like taking thousands of dollars, when you add up all of the additional charges, and giving \$50 back.

There's no argument that we need to do more to encourage physical activity in our society, particularly amongst children, because if, as a child, you get involved with sports, you learn the importance and you enjoy physical activity, there's more chance that that will become something you'll do for the rest of your life. I know some of the medical officers of health have pointed out that functional activity actually has the most benefit over a lifetime. I think they mean by "functional activity" where you're actually walking to work or riding to work—you're getting activity for a purpose. I'm sure one of the other speakers will elaborate on that once we receive more information from the medical officers of health who have looked at it.

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But certainly there are huge benefits for society in getting young people in particular to get more involved, to get healthier. Across North America, we definitely have an obesity problem. We have chronic diseases like diabetes that are on the upswing. I know I read an article in one of the newspapers last week saying that diabetes costs—I believe it's up to \$4.9 billion in Ontario, and it's predicted to be over \$7 billion by 2020. Obviously, getting people active at a young age and keeping them active their whole life has benefits for the health care costs, for quality of life and many other things.

That's part of the reason I have a private member's bill—that will be debated on Thursday—that, if it passes, would require provincial secondary highway shoulders to be paved when they're being rebuilt. That gives people more of an opportunity to cycle close to home, to cycle

when they're visiting an area—perhaps Prince Edward county, Manitoulin Island, Niagara, or Parry Sound—Muskoka would be one of the prime destinations. When they're visiting those areas, if there are more places to ride, then that will be an attraction for the area. It will also be a benefit for the people in the area. Doing things to encourage more physical activity, I agree with. I think there are lots of benefits to it.

Getting back to this bill, we're talking about a \$50 tax credit for families. I'd simply say that families in the province have faced so many increased costs; they're feeling very squeezed, and I certainly hear about it on a regular basis from my constituents. Look at some of the increased costs that have been passed on to families. We have a Toronto election going on right now. The government passed the City of Toronto Act. As a result of that, there's now a municipal land transfer tax and there's the personal vehicle tax on Toronto residents, so that the average Toronto home has gone up by \$3,000 and the cost for a Toronto family is about \$120 a year for a two-car family. Together, that's an additional \$381 million out of Toronto taxpayers' pocketbooks, and that's an additional cost.

Of course, we've seen one of the largest tax increases, despite the Premier saying he wouldn't increase taxes in a couple of elections: the Ontario health premium. That's a big cost for Ontario families. Despite that, of course, we still have seen challenges in the health care system. I know I certainly see it in my own riding, where Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare is struggling to balance its budget. It's still projecting a deficit—I believe it's over \$3 million this year—despite having a deficit reduction plan and despite having made significant cuts, most recently cutting cafeteria services and shutting down the Burk's Falls health centre. Unfortunately, there's a lot of waste out there in the health system. So despite Ontario residents and families paying this new premium, which has generated over \$15 billion, we're still seeing cuts in health care, and that's an additional cost for Ontario families.

Energy is becoming a huge thing. I'm hearing from constituents who are watching their energy bills go up, and that's having a big effect on the family budget. Constituents are writing to me; they're concerned about all of the various energy charges and increases. It seems to be—I could go through them, but the smart meters are certainly one of them. In my area, they've installed smart meters but they haven't turned them on, yet everybody's bill has gone up. So I'm not sure what's going on with those smart meters, but I'm hearing from other MPPs, when we have our caucus meetings, that they're hearing the same story from constituents: that they get these new meters installed, and—I don't know whether they're having technical problems with them, but their bills seem to go up significantly. Most of that is anecdotal, but I would say it has been a very common theme from many MPPs I've talked to, and also from individual constituents.

I've got a letter here from—I won't name the constituent. I know they said we could read it, but I don't know

whether they necessarily want their name in Hansard. Here it is:

"I would like to add our concerns about the new hydro smart meters to others that I'm sure you have received. Our new meter was installed last August at our home on Kakshe Lake. We live here for six months of the year and it is closed" for up to six months.

"Our actual usage from October 15 to January 13 was 15 kilowatt hours per day. Most of that time, except for a few days, we weren't here and everything was off except for heating our little storage area to 10° degrees. "Then, under the same conditions, from only January 13 to February 11 our actual usage was 62 kilowatt hours per day! That's four times the usage per day under the exact same conditions! January may be a cold month, but, not enough to make anything like that difference!"

"Then, the next month, under the exact same conditions and probably just as cold outside, we used 45 kilowatt hours per day!"

"I believe that these meters have some kind of fault. Please take the time to question Hydro One about them."

They go on from there. That's not an uncommon—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, on the point you and I discussed earlier, you had equal time with the government member on a different topic. I would like to hear now about Bill 99.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I say, Bill 99 is about providing a few crumbs to Ontario families to relieve the burden of other increased fees that the government has brought about, so I was just illustrating some of the other increased fees. I think energy is certainly one of the areas. Ontario families are really noticing substantial increases in their energy bills. Unfortunately, that's something that is continuing. The forecast in the future looks very challenging. Energy is something that pretty much all families do have to pay for.

Of course, another increase that also affects energy is the fact that the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I think we should nip this all in the bud, and we should keep our remarks to Bill 99. I don't recall seeing some of what you are discussing in Bill 99. Please.

Mr. Norm Miller: As I say, I think it does relate to Bill 99. I don't, of course, want to argue with the Speaker, because that would be against the rules—

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller:—or challenge the Speaker, but Bill 99 is about giving a \$50 tax credit to Ontario families. I'm simply illustrating—and if I was able, I would like to illustrate how so many different costs have increased through the programs brought forward by the McGuinty government.

There's a long list that I have here of various tax increases that have been brought forward by the McGuinty government. I think the fact is that we've seen so many different increases for Ontario families on such a variety of staples that they require, energy certainly

being one of the things you can't live without in the province of Ontario—and the new HST, which applies to so many things that families depend on.

Many are related to Bill 99, because of the cost of being involved in sports. Sporting activities involve driving a car, for example. If your child is playing hockey, on dull or sharp skates, you have to get them to the hockey arena. I know in my case, I had three kids who played hockey, and living in rural Ontario, that involved thousands of kilometres a year. In fact, I think I'll call it the worst year when they were all playing on travel teams. We put about 50,000 kilometres on one winter getting around to various locations in Ontario, to various arenas.

Obviously, if you're buying fuel for 50,000 kilometres, with the new HST, it's going to be a lot of extra tax for Ontario families. This \$50 rebate would hardly cover the fuel for one trip to one game on one weekend. There are some real, substantial costs involved in participating in sports, but this bill is going to have a mere \$50 come back to Ontario families. I think that we as the opposition support anything, whether it's crumbs, that the McGuinty government decides to give back to Ontario families, but they've been faced with so many different large increases in the sorts of costs that they just can't avoid paying.

0950

Also, if you are going to travel to a soccer game or to figure skating or take your child to Scouts, one of the qualifying activities, you have to have an automobile, and you have to have insurance on that automobile. Recently, the government has made changes to auto insurance and, essentially, people will be paying more for automobile insurance and getting the same or less coverage. I just received a letter from a constituent here, and I'll just see if I can find the letter from my—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, you're really making it tough for the Speaker. The standing orders are very explicit. I try to give some latitude, but I think you're stretching it and I don't want everybody else to have to get into that position as well. So, please, Bill 99 is about some very specific issues which you could address. Please.

Interjections.

Mr. Norm Miller: The government members are making it difficult for me, Mr. Speaker.

We've made it clear that we'll support it even if it's crumbs coming back, \$50 crumbs coming back, despite the government taking thousands of dollars from the pockets of Ontario families. They're going to get a few crumbs back, and we're going to support them getting that bit of money coming back.

But I think it is important that the real concerns of Ontario families—and these are real letters from real people who are concerned with increasing costs they are facing that come out of the same budget that's going to give this \$50 back. I have a letter from a constituent very concerned about the fact that her auto insurance is going up and they're getting less coverage. That's part of the family budget that this \$50 is going to be going into. I

have letters from seniors concerned about the HST and how that's going to affect their ability to survive. Unless they have grandkids, they probably won't be getting the \$50 back, so they are out of luck there. The point I would like to make is simply that \$50 is relatively insignificant. I think it's more about optics, about politics, than it is about really benefiting Ontario families. Having said that, we're supporting them getting these few crumbs from the McGuinty government.

I'm sure the member from Durham—I think he's working on his notes right now—would like to make further comment. I would simply conclude by saying that this \$50 is relatively insignificant compared to all the various increased fees and taxes that have been brought about by the McGuinty government since 2003. It's thousands of dollars in increased taxes, thousands and thousands of dollars, and they're going to get a mere \$50 back for some families under this program that is now before the House in Bill 99.

With that, I will pass the floor on to the member from Durham.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I know the member has made a very emphatic case that we would be supporting this but we are disappointed in the fact that, I guess, in the broadest sense—you've got to start at square one here. I think the Premier, in all fairness, listened. The outrage because of the HST, broadly, the cancellation of programs that would then be not affordable, some of which we've been talking about being hockey and other activities for young children—they would be paying HST; therefore it would become unaffordable.

If you look at the \$500, I guess you'd be paying about 13%, roughly, so it would be \$65 tax, and you're going to get back a tax credit of \$50. I think there's a maximum as well for a family of \$100 for, as has been mentioned, the case of a child with a disability. Up to the age of 18 they'd be eligible for up to \$100. That's pretty well what the bill says, but it has some other questionable language that needs to be addressed.

There was quite a good article in the *Globe and Mail*, I thought, for the viewer at home who might want to stay addressed to it. It says here, "Activities that are not related to sports would have to be supervised, suitable and not part of a school curriculum in order to be eligible, and would include programs such as drama, choir or Girl Guides."

You know, in some respects they haven't quite got it right. I think there's a couple of discriminatory things here, because technically, today what we're trying to do is encourage young people, and indeed older people, to stay active. Why are they having a tax, the HST, on gym memberships? We're trying to keep the active lifestyle, and I would endorse that.

I would propose an amendment here: that we change the age restrictions from 16 to anyone who's participating in an active activity or program. For instance, persons with Alzheimer's are encouraged to do Sudoku

and crosswords and social programs of interaction. Why are we discriminating against seniors? I think they've got it wrong. I think it's partially right—and I see the member smiling, the new minister. Congratulations, as well. But my point being, it's so skilfully cheating the people of Ontario—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Cheating?

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, “cheating,” meaning not giving them their full reward. I mean, paying tax on a gym membership?

Obesity is a problem in many of the age groups. It's not just unique to young people, and one way of combating that is to encourage physical activity: walking to and from school or work, as I do. I walk up from the GO train at Union Station up to here pretty well every morning. I would think that at the Legislature, if they want to do something important here for members, they should have a change room and a shower room so as you walk up from the GO train and you're perspiring, you could have a shower and a change room. But if I had a membership at the University of Toronto Hart House, I would have to pay tax on that, HST. I should be able to get a refund. I should be able to get the tax refund, and so should anyone who's doing things that benefit themselves and society at large. We've got this health problem. You know, the unaffordability of the health care system is one of the topics that's in the media today.

So I'm saying that Bill 99 doesn't get it done. It's an admission that they went overboard on the HST; it's a clear admission. They've copied a program which the federal government, under Stephen Harper, initiated. Our leader, Tim Hudak, would probably work co-operatively if this was a fair tax credit, a reasonable solution to the heavy-handed HST that the people of Ontario are struggling with. This is about jobs and the economy.

The amendment that I think we should propose here—but our critic, Mr. Miller, has a solid hand on the finance file, I can tell you that. He has great experience in that as well. His dad, I believe, was a former Treasurer as well as a former Premier of Ontario. Mr. Miller's father brings a lot, and Mr. Miller does as well.

I think it's a cynical PR move, as has been said by some of the media. I'm looking at this from the Windsor Star—the members from Windsor should take heed here—in the paper just the other day: “Ontario finance minister Dwight Duncan is selling the new children's activity tax credit as a tax break for families who spend money on extracurricular activities for their kids.

“This is designed to make it more affordable for parents to have their kids in sports and cultural events,” Duncan said. Covering everything from hockey and soccer to art lessons, the measure allows parents to deduct up to \$500 to receive an annual rebate of ... \$50 per child or \$100.”

This is an admission. It's a cynical PR move, and I think the Windsor Star has it right. I would say that senior citizens' groups should be outraged that this is unfairly targeting children who—by the way, activities in school are exempt. Well, children playing some of the

musical instruments, often in programs today we're finding out, have to buy their own reeds for their wind instruments, and for string instruments.

1000

It's up to \$570 a year that the average family is paying in schools for extracurricular activities. Why aren't these eligible? Even for access to the Internet sometimes they're being charged, and other kinds of activities—sports equipment, as well as for theatre. Children perhaps have to forgo part-time jobs to take part in the school play. I remain concerned that this is nothing but an unfair, unpleasant way of dealing with a significant tax grab.

Bill 99 is only part of a solution to the dreaded HST. I think we've come to a complete admission. I see members on the government side shaking their heads. They know that this tax—we were seeing it yesterday on electricity. Mr. Shurman, the member from Thornhill, raised a very good point on the electricity bill going up 13%. Why don't we get a similar program?

This Bill 99 needs to go out for public consultations. I would encourage that. Let the people of Ontario have some say in this shifting, sliding, creeping tax grab that the HST is. I think there's room here. You'll find consensus on this side for more public hearings, and this Bill 99 is a good place to start. As I said, the whole bill itself—in fairness here, I've just finished reading it—is a page and a half. If you read the preamble to the bill, which is important to put on the record—the parliamentary assistant, the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, didn't take the time to do that. I'll just say that this is the explanatory note of the bill:

“The bill amends the Taxation Act, 2007, to implement a children's activity tax credit.”

It goes on to say, “The children's activity tax credit is set out in the new section 103.1 of the act. The credit is refundable and is based on amounts that are indexed under section 23 of the act. For taxation years ending after 2009”—so you can't go back retroactively—“an individual is able to claim a credit in respect of expenses incurred in enrolling a qualifying child in a program of physical activity prescribed under the Income Tax Act (Canada) or a qualifying program. The maximum credit for 2010 is \$50 per qualifying child and an additional \$50 per qualifying child with a disability. The credit would be claimed in the tax return filed by the individual for the taxation year. Consequential amendments are made to subsections 84(1) and (3) of the act.”

If you go into it, this is how much time they spent on this \$50 tax credit—and the amount of money they're going to spend on processing it. I can't believe it. To process a cheque, first of all the individual applying for it and their accountant—by the way, now they have to pay HST on that accountant's fee. When they apply, they have to retain their receipts. If you haven't retained your receipts, you're ineligible. So when you're registering your child in hockey or in a dance program or whatever activity or program, keep the receipts. The organization now has to specifically issue a receipt for tax purposes.

Those receipts will all have to be numbered, because you could be making them up. These are auditable statements now. They're not just some person teaching gym or jazz or whatever else; they have to have an accountable, valid tax receipt with a number on it and all the rest of it. That's more red tape for small business right there. The hockey teams now are going to have to have registered receipts. This is what I think. For \$50—wait a minute here. I don't think we can support this. It's just creating more red tape for the hockey leagues, for the dance groups, the theatre groups, for the hiking groups, whatever. It's just another bunch of red tape.

In fact—I didn't make this up—if you look, we're spending time this morning, and the government, in fairness to them—and I give them credit; at least they didn't spend an hour talking about nothing. It's a "Cynical PR Move." I think that sums it up. That's in the Windsor Star; that's the home paper for the Minister of Finance. They get it.

But when I go on here, then the Canada Revenue Agency has to actually audit the documents. They may have to send correspondence to the filing applicant to say, "You're missing a receipt," or "It's not a valid receipt." That person is probably making about \$80,000 a year, the auditor who's looking at the form. I can't believe it.

Then, if you're eligible—let's say you only spent \$499. Then there was tax. The tax can't be claimed as an expense. Say you paid \$480 to register the two children, or whatever it was, in hockey, dance, theatre or a play. The tax would bring it up to, let's say, \$530. It wouldn't be a \$500 expense because part of that expense was tax. Now an auditor is going to spend the whole morning talking to you on the phone about this: "You didn't have an expense of \$500. Therefore, you're not eligible."

I can't believe it. Look at the pile of red tape that they have created. It's unbelievable.

Mr. Rick Johnson: Read the bill.

Mr. John O'Toole: You haven't read the bill. I question—the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock needs to pay close attention here. The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock should spend more time talking about wind turbines. You had the Premier down to implement this program in your riding. The Premier of the province went to his riding and—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): On a point of order, the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock: What standing order are you referring to?

Mr. Rick Johnson: The member is referring to things that aren't involved in Bill 99.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That's not a point of order.

The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: With all due respect, he's a pleasant fellow. He had the Premier down to his riding to talk about Bill 99. It ended up there was a whole bunch of people from the Peterborough Regional Health Centre—the member from Peterborough is here—and they

were there protesting the layoffs at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre. The next thing is there was a big protest about the wind turbines in his riding. The whole program—it was on television.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: It was on CHEX Television. It was a week ago—two weeks this Thursday.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, there was. The member from Peterborough is interjecting now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Yes, and I would like you—

Mr. John O'Toole: The member for Peterborough is actually wrong—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Let's nip this one in the bud, too. The member for Durham, you're supposed to speak through the Chair. The responses on the government side can be limited, too, please.

Mr. John O'Toole: I think I've made the point that really—poorly—but the point being made, it's 72; we'll go for 72.

Speaking of 72, that's the other bill, the water bill. There's another bill where there's tax on water now. That's what that bill is about. I can tell you. I've read it. I spoke on it yesterday.

This is another case where our Premier, Premier Dad, has a spending problem. In fact, I would say this bill—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham, I can tell you that at our Speakers' meeting this morning, there were specific references that the Speaker this afternoon will refer to, and you've just used one of the ones we are not going to allow.

Mr. John O'Toole: In that case, it's still fairly legal until this afternoon. But I will respect that. I won't press the limit anymore.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): You know what, folks? You can tell when members have nothing to say because they start talking about everything.

Mr. John O'Toole: The last comment by the Speaker is saying virtually what I'm saying: There's nothing in this bill. There's no money, there's no content, and there's no consideration for seniors.

I encourage our critic Mr. Miller from Parry Sound-Muskoka to actually move an amendment to make this tax credit eligible—the parliamentary assistant from Kitchener-Conestoga is here. I would extend this—this is a positive idea—to all persons, especially persons suffering under a medical condition, for participating in things, whether it's Alzheimer's, obesity or whatever, or even persons with diabetes and things like that—these growing chronic diseases—so that they could also get a tax credit. Now that is something that I think we could find unanimous consent for today on this bill. If you'd recognize that it isn't just a slick PR move—this is a real attempt to offset some of the onerous burdens of the HST. I hope the Premier's listening—in your office, probably with a coffee and your feet up on the desk. Nonetheless, I would hope that he's listening.

1010

I can commit that our leader, Tim Hudak, thinks fairness and reasonableness is the way to work together, working together with smart policies on tax changes, recognizing that this activity tax credit might need to go out for public hearings to expand the scope of it and the entitlements to other groups.

We've specified 16 and under; persons with disabilities, 18—what I'm suggesting is 65 and over as well.

The members from Northumberland and Peterborough might want to speak up in caucus on this, and I think Mr. Rinaldi and I are both over 65, so we'd probably qualify.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Hey, hey, I'm not. Speak for yourself.

Mr. John O'Toole: God, you look like you are. But anyway—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it's the pressure. It's the pressure you're under. I understand that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Maybe it's time I intervened again.

Mr. John O'Toole: These programs—if you read in section 2 of the bill, I think it's in section 103, clauses (a) and (b), here's what's not included: the cost of travel and accommodation, any amount that is an eligible fitness expense and any amount deducted under the federal act. If you've already claimed it federally, you don't get it.

Here's another thing: It goes on—and great language; I don't get the convoluted language. It says, “‘Ineligible activity’ means an activity or type of activity prescribed by the Minister of Finance for the purposes of this section.” There's a whole series of regulations of ineligible expenses or ineligible activities that have to be issued here and gazetted. It says, “‘Ineligible program’ means a program or type of program prescribed by the Minister”—in other words, he hasn't really figured it all out yet—“of Finance for the purposes of this section.”

Qualifying: Here's another—listen to all of the words to this thing. “‘Qualifying activity’ means a supervised”—keyword: “supervised”—“activity suitable for children”—who's going to make these calls?—“that is not an ineligible activity”—wait a minute, here—“that does not promote illegal activity”—wait a minute—“and that involves one or more of the following ...” I can see more red tape here and abuse.

But Girl Guides, it specifically said—how about Scouting, Venturers and cadets? This summer, I attended a couple of programs where the sea cadets or the air cadets were demonstrating in their community in a positive activity. In fact, these are the young leaders of the future. I think those programs shouldn't have to go through a lot of red tape to qualify. Look, there are still expenses incurred when they're going to a camp for the air cadets or the sea cadets. Let's look at this and get it right.

Why are we trying to rush this through? I think it's like a lot of things that have happened over the summer; they screwed them up. Pardon my language. They didn't

implement them properly. I think we'll all admit that. The eco tax is a perfect example of the ill-conceived—they didn't even think about it. In fact, the minister basically had to step aside. Minister Gerretsen is, in all due respect, a nice fellow, but he is no longer the Minister of the Environment. Why? I think it's the eco tax. They dumped him.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, obviously he's not there anymore, and that program was shelved. But just stay tuned; it's only shelved for 90 days. There's another new tax coming on 9,000 products—an additional tax. Imagine taxing cars—an eco tax. They're already taxed to death: the gas they use. Every time you fill up with gas now, you're paying tax.

This seems to be a bit of overusing the time here a little bit, perhaps, but here's the point: It's clear the consistent result of everything that has happened here in the last year or so is more taxes.

Interjection: They should probably change their name to the Liberal taxation party.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Liberal tax-and-spend party. I think we should put a motion forward to change the name of Premier McGuinty's party to the tax-and-spend party, TSP. It's a nice acronym.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: We have lots of names: hard-working, committed, trustworthy.

There are a lot of things in this bill that I have looked at that I think need to be discussed in the public forum. I would call for public hearings on this bill and I would ask that you consider giving the tax credit to seniors who take the time to take care of themselves, fitness—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Tai chi.

Mr. John O'Toole: Tai chi, the member from Peterborough mentioned. I think these are extremely valid observations and I think we would support—I know our leader, Tim Hudak, spoke about it recently, his concern for senior citizens. In our caucus yesterday, he was in a very highly emotional state talking about the impact of the HST on seniors. He was thinking of his parents, I'm sure, and his young child as well, who are going to live in a regime where you're going to have to file first, probably, in this bill, the way I read it, to see if the program you're applying for is eligible. Because it's not quite described here yet. It's going to be done in regulation. It says that right here; that's on page 2 of the bill. I would suggest that somebody taking art lessons, for instance, would have to pay tax on the supplies. But I'm calling on the Premier in this debate today to have public hearings and to listen to seniors and consider them for those activity tax credits.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8(a), the House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce in the gallery today friends of ours from all across Ontario and my riding: Mr. Ed Borkowski, the new executive director of the Ontario Association of Food Banks; accompanying him this morning are Mr. Myles Vanni from the Inn of the Good Shepherd in Sarnia, and from Ottawa, Ms. Judy Dancause, the chair of the Ontario Association of Food Banks.

The Ontario Association of Food Banks will be meeting with all members today to talk about my private member's bill, Bill 78, a food bank donation tax credit for farmers. I'd ask you to welcome them to the Legislature today.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to introduce in the gallery today Kevin Somer, mayor of Smooth Rock Falls, and Harold Wilson, president of the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just before we begin question period today, I want to take a few minutes to follow up on comments made by myself yesterday and continue to address the matter of decorum.

Recognizing that question period is, by its very nature, an intense proceeding of this House and carries with it some latitude of behaviour, it should nevertheless be remembered that the public do watch, and there is an expectation of good conduct placed on all of us.

I am not so naive to deny that there may be other ambitions or aspirations involved in question period besides those of seeking information and holding the government to account. Nevertheless, that is the primary purpose of this proceeding, and there are certain principles that we can follow that would serve to move us in the direction of that outcome. Among those principles are the proper use of language and form of address.

First, it is helpful and serves to mitigate the likelihood of insult if members direct their remarks to me in the chair. Remember that. When you're standing up, don't be looking across the aisle; be looking at the Speaker. The talent of speaking in the third person may be one that many of you find difficult, but I ask that rather than hurling accusations directly at your colleagues across the floor, you make the effort to speak to me and through me. I will be reminding all members to do so more frequently.

Second, there's a long-standing tradition in this House that we refer to each other by title or riding name rather than given name. Doing so raises the level of debate from the personal to the professional and recognizes that we are here in representation of our constituency.

In the past, Speakers have exercised some latitude in the enforcement of this traditional guideline. For example, it has for many years been acceptable to make reference to a particular administration by the Premier's last name, as in the "Harris government," the "Eves government,"

the "Rae government" or the "McGuinty government," and I have no issue with that.

Where the use of names becomes problematic is when it is done in a manner that is disrespectful or mean-spirited, used in an insulting, accusatory or mocking tone or context intended to debase an individual member. It is unparliamentary, and it is unacceptable. You need only to look as far as yesterday's Hansard to understand what I mean. There are examples there from both sides of the House and throughout question period.

I know that all honourable members are astute enough to know the difference between temperate, respectful language and that which is insulting or offensive. Speaking through the Chair and properly addressing each other serves to enhance the level of discourse and raise the bar on decorum.

So take this as fair warning that I will be demanding a greater observance of this practice as we go forward. Thank you, members.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SMART METERS

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Premier, or if not, then the Acting Premier, as the case may be: Premier, on April 20, 2004, you said to Ontario families that smart meters would "save you money." The Premier repeated that promise again on May 14, 2009, in a media release. Could the Premier inform the House exactly how much money smart meters have saved the average Ontario family?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I would think the Leader of the Opposition would be aware that we're in the process of installing smart meters across this province. There are 4.1 million or so that are installed as of today, and our goal is to have 4.5 million. I'd also suggest that time of use is part of what smart meters do. Indeed, smart meters are on the way to implementation as well.

The latest estimate we have is that about 800,000 people have smart meters installed in their homes at this point in time. It's far too soon to know what the precise savings will be for those particular individuals or for the system as a whole until, indeed, smart meters are much more further rolled out.

We do have studies that have been done, pilots that have been done, and in my supplementary, I'm happy to share the information that we have at this point in time with the Leader of the Opposition.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I thought I heard the minister say that he has no clue. He said that he doesn't know how much you're going to save families. The Premier promised that the smart meter experiment would save money for average families. You're hell-bent on putting millions of these across the province, and you're telling me that

you don't know what their impact is going to be? What level of incompetence has the energy policy of the McGuinty government descended to?

Let me put this in perspective—and back to the Premier. Families are struggling in Ontario today to make ends meet. Your smart meter experiment has been very expensive on the backs of seniors and small businesses, and you can't tell us if they'll save money or not. Premier, won't you admit that your expensive smart meter experiment has gone badly off the rails?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This is not just about the prospect of consumption management, although that's very, very important. Smart meters do a lot of things, and I think it's very important that all members in this Legislature recognize that the investment in smart meters is a very important investment as we build out our smart grid, as we prepare our energy system to take on the challenges of the future that consumers, businesses, our government—all Ontarians—are going to face.

1040

It's about ensuring that we have precise details to energy providers when there's an outage or a malfunction on the grid—that's an improvement to our system. It's about enhanced accuracy on meter reads. It's about reducing tampering and theft of electricity. It's about environmental benefits as a result of load shifting. It's about proactive customer service when outages and malfunctions are immediately known. And it is, indeed, about enabling time of use—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The minister says that smart meters do a lot of things, but what I'm hearing about when I talk to Ontario families across the province is one thing they do do, and that's squeeze more money out of the wallets of hard-working Ontario families. These are not smart meters; they're nothing but Dalton McGuinty's latest tax machine—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

I will remind the honourable member of the statement that I just made that we refer to either the government or a position or a riding.

Mr. Tim Hudak: These smart meters are nothing more than tax machines. Minister, you know that they're very expensive to install. You know that there have been serious questions about reliability and accuracy, to the point where Measurement Canada reported that your smart meters do not meet federal standards.

I'm going to ask you, Minister: Given the great problems you've had, given the announcement yesterday that you're backtracking once again on off-peak power, given it's nothing more than a tax grab, won't you do the right thing and set this aside until you get this program right, and freeze this program today?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We all know, and it's important that Ontarians know, that the Leader of the Opposition simply does not support the important and critical investments we're making in our energy system to build a stronger, more reliable and cleaner system of energy. He

wants to take us back to the days when the Leader of the Opposition was serving in cabinet, when his policies and the policies of his government of that day created a weak, unreliable and dirty system of energy that was polluting our air, impacting the health of our kids and impacting the future health of our grandkids.

We have come too far, Ontarians have worked too hard to go back to those days of a weak, unreliable and dirty system of energy. This government cares about the future of our kids. This government cares about the future of our economy. This government cares about our energy future—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Stop the clock. Members will please come to order.

New question.

SMART METERS

Mr. Tim Hudak: To the Premier. Premier, the Ontario PCs have opposed your smart meter experiment from day one because we knew that your smart meters were nothing more than expensive tax machines that would hit families and seniors hard. They have gone badly off the rails. There are serious questions about their accuracy. They have become very expensive to install, and you signal that you are once again backtracking on the rates you're charging for time of use.

Premier, I'll ask you to do the right thing. Will you admit that this program has gone badly off the rails, freeze it now, and fix the problems before you put one more smart meter in a family's home across this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: This is our third day of question period, and I sense a lot of negativity from the leader of the official opposition. There are a lot of things—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As I was saying, I sense a lot of negativity from the leader of the official opposition these days. Apparently there are many things that he does not like about Ontario. On the other hand, there are many things that we do like about Ontario. We're proud of the work that Ontarians continue to do working together, whether it's involving moving ahead with public education, the quality of education we offer our children, the quality of health care that we offer all our families, or the work that we continue to do together to ensure that we have in place a modern, reliable, clean electricity system.

I hear on a regular basis from the leader of the official opposition about what he doesn't like, but I've never heard him put forward a single positive policy proposal, and I'd like to hear that from him—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, simply do the right thing. Freeze your program in place and fix the growing problems with your expensive smart meter experiment. Quite frankly, Ontario families cannot afford Dalton McGuinty's expensive energy experiments anymore—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the member again of my statement that I made and remind all members they are to use titles, riding names or ministries. Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Quite frankly, families face the choice of a Premier who wants to lecture seniors to do their dishwashing after 11 p.m., to do their laundry at 2 in the morning, to tell families with kids to get them up at 4 or 5 in the morning to have their showers; we, instead, believe consumers should have a choice.

We believe families make the best decisions for their own household budgets. I'd ask the Premier to freeze this program and offer families a choice on whether they want to participate going forward.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, my honourable colleague begins with a very negative outlook on the people of Ontario.

We believe that they actually want us, in a positive way, to build a new, reliable, clean electricity system. We believe they want us to invest, for example, in that massive expansion of hydroelectric capacity at Niagara Falls. We think they do want to be given the opportunity to participate in savings in their own home and electricity conservation through smart meters.

I think one of the shared responsibilities we have on all sides of this House is to make sure that the consumers, householders, have access to good-quality information about smart meters that we're introducing into their homes, about the new options that it creates for them so that they can participate in this exciting new development here in Ontario as, together, we build a reliable, clean, energy-efficient electricity system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, I stand with families who believe that they, not the Premier, can decide best how to conserve energy and lower their power use. While the McGuinty government favours using sticks to drive up costs on consumers through hydro and through taxes, we want to put more carrots in the system, more incentives, and give consumers choice on how they approach their energy bills.

Premier, this has gone badly off the rails. Your minister admitted he had no clue what the cost is going to be to Ontario families, and you have taken us down a multi-billion-dollar expensive energy experiment that is hitting seniors and families hard.

Will you do the right thing, Premier? Freeze this in place, fix this program, give families a choice, and quit going after their pocketbooks.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Well, my honourable colleague is against smart meters. He's against giving Ontario householders a new choice, a new option available

to them with respect to the usage of electricity. He's against full-day—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier. Members will please come to order. Member from Halton. Member from Durham. Minister of Community Safety.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're also aware, of course, that he's against full-day kindergarten. We're also aware that he's against the tax provisions that we put in place to help Ontario families. Again, I say, on behalf of the people of Ontario, there will come a point in time—I think we're fast approaching that—when the leader of the official opposition might want to put forward some positive policy proposals so we get a better sense of where it is that he wants to go.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Premier admitted yesterday that the current smart meter pricing scheme simply isn't working.

My question is a simple one: Will he rule out a rate hike during daytime hours?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think my honourable colleague knows that we don't live in that particular world; we live in this one. The fact of the matter is we live in a world where we are building a new reliable, clean, modern electricity system. There are new costs associated with that.

For example, we've already brought online 8,000 megawatts of new generation. We have invested some \$8 billion in that new generation. We're also investing—I think it's close to \$4 billion—in some 5,000 kilometres of new transmission. There are some real costs associated with building that modern, reliable, clean electricity system.

The leader of the NDP knows that, and I'm sure she wants to understand that and make sure that when she addresses these kinds of issues, she's not telling us that the price of electricity can never, ever go up in the province of Ontario.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier keeps defending this latest boondoggle that his government has brought forward, but seniors and families simply cannot afford another single penny on their hydro bills. So why won't the Premier rule out increases that will bring those rates to 10, 11 or 12 cents per kilowatt hour?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Clearly the leader of the opposition is totally misinformed. This project is on budget, it is on time, and indeed, there are 4.1 million meters that have been installed to date, on the way to 4.5 million. She really doesn't know what she's talking about when it comes to the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I will continue to stand up through the question period, as I commented earlier, endeavouring to do my best to ensure that we conduct ourselves in a professional manner and not make comments as were just made. I would just ask that you withdraw the comment, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to withdraw that.

The fact is, I think what the leader of the opposition really ought to be sharing with Ontarians is, what would she replace our aging infrastructure with? What kind of meters would she want to be installing our aging infrastructure with? Would she want us to be using past technology or would she want us to be modernizing our technology?

There is a cost to modernization of our energy technology. There is a cost to giving the opportunity for Ontarians to be able to shift their usage from peak usage. But at the end of the day—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This billion-dollar boondoggle is breaking the budgets of families in this province. That's what this minister needs to be aware of. Yet the Premier and his minister both agree that they think this turkey is actually going to fly in the province of Ontario. But seniors like Ralph Addison tell us that being gouged doesn't help to conserve energy. He says this: "I am a retiree living primarily on investment income. Smart meters will add about 35% to my monthly hydro bill, as I stay home in the summer.... Where is the fairness in that?"

Will the Premier tell Mr. Addison today that he won't be raising hydro rates during daytime hours?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Premier and I and our government from day one have said that as this program is implemented, we're going to continually be reviewing the differential between peak use and non-peak use to ensure that we get it to a really effective balance where those who are shifting use will have the incentive to do so, and those who are unable to shift their use are not unduly harmed by that.

This program is in the implementation of being installed. The NDP is already offside on a project and a program that is going to be able to help conserve, to help shift the use of energy, to help reduce the tension in our system in terms of having to build more energy supply. One would think that their critic would be very much at odds with the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. The Premier's plan isn't saving energy but it is definitely hurting people. These are the stories that we are hearing. Mrs. Duff writes this: "My husband and I are retired and living on a fixed income. My hydro bill with

the new smart meter has cost us our social life.... We no longer go to bingo or even a movie."

My question is: Will the Premier be raising rates during daytime hours?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to be very clear because I think we owe this to each other and we owe it to Ontarians: Electricity rates in the province of Ontario are going up. It may be that my colleagues opposite are proposing a rate freeze. If that is their policy, I think it's important that they make that public. But on this side of the House we've got to contend with reality. We inherited an electricity system that was weak, unreliable and dirty. We're investing billions and billions of dollars into modernizing a system so that it's strong, reliable and clean. We think that's the responsible thing to do. We'll work as hard as we can to keep rates down as much as we can, but we will continue to invest in a strong, reliable, modern, clean system, and there is—I think it's important to be clear on this—a cost associated with that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People already feel that they're being gouged under this Premier's pricing scheme.

Chris Savoia writes this: "The actual increase to my latest hydro bills has been in excess of 80% ... my bills have averaged less than \$80 a month...."

"Suddenly the new meters come in ... and I find myself paying an average of \$140 per month."

Can the Premier guarantee Mr. Savoia that he won't be jacking his rates higher in a desperate bid to make this boondoggle scheme work?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I will try to lend a little bit more definition to the difference between that side and this side of the House.

We're going to work as hard as we can to keep rates down as low as we possibly can, but I want to be direct with the people of Ontario. We inherited a system that was weak, unreliable and dirty. It was not in keeping with our expectations, not in keeping with our standards, and, frankly, not in keeping with the values that we share as a people. So we have taken this responsibility on.

We've had our shoulder to the wheel for some time now. We are making massive investments in new generation, clean generation. We're making massive investments in new transmission. At the same time, through our green energy plan, we are creating thousands and thousands of new jobs. There is a cost associated with that, but we're going to work as hard as we can to keep those costs down for consumers.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. As I'm sure when the leader of the official opposition asks a question he wants to hear an answer, I know that the honourable members would want to offer that same respect to the leader of the third party. I would just ask that they be conscious that when somebody is responding to a question that the honourable leader of the third party asked, they give that leader the courtesy of hearing the answer.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government has already blown more than a billion dollars on the smart meters plan, but people are not conserving energy. They simply are not conserving. The Premier admits that his scheme isn't working; he says he wants to provide an incentive to them. On behalf of the people all over this province, all over Ontario, who are already getting the shock of their lives when they open their hydro bills, I want to know: Is this Premier planning to raise their rates in a desperate attempt to make this scheme fly?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think it's really important that we be clear on this because it's a very important public policy debate. My honourable colleague the leader of the NDP is, I believe, proposing the same thing as the leader of the official opposition, and that is that we impose a rate freeze on electricity rates in the province of Ontario.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Push it to the tax base, just like you guys did.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to be very clear: What that means is that you push those costs over to the tax base. You transfer those costs over to taxpayers. That's not something we're prepared to do.

What we are prepared to do and what we have been doing is investing heavily in a new, modern, clean, reliable electricity system: billions of dollars in new generation like that massive project at Niagara Falls and the massive project over the Lower Mattagami in northern Ontario. We're going to continue to invest massively in transmission projects and we're going to work as hard as we possibly can to keep rates down for consumers. But we want to assure them that when they go to the wall and flick the switch, the lights—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: It looks like the Premier and the energy minister's defence of this hydro rate hike is scaring half of the caucus members out of this place.

My question is for the Premier. A Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters report added up the cost of your hydro rate increases. Since today, since the increases already, it said that Ottawa families will face a further 42% rate hike by 2015. Data from the same report says that your hydro increases will make families in North Bay pay 43% more, families in Peterborough will pay 44% more, and you're making families in Barrie, Markham and Richmond Hill pay 45.5% more. Just how much more will families have to pay for your hydro policies after 2015?

1100

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm delighted that the member has asked this question because it gives me an opportunity to talk about a very important initiative that our government moved forward to over the course of the break, an initiative that, frankly, we moved forward to in

consultation with many of the big industries in this province to ensure that we gave those industries the opportunity to engage in conservation measures, to shift their use from peak use and lower their energy costs as a result. The result of this initiative—and this is not just according to the Minister of Energy; this is according to those industries—is, they will be able to increase their production, increase the amount of jobs that they're creating in this province, lower their energy costs and lower the costs to the entire system. It's a smart thing to do, and I'm very glad the member brought this question up because it gave me an opportunity to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: People won't be able to afford those products they're producing because they can't afford their hydro bill. Dalton McGuinty doesn't have a plan—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member of the statement that I made earlier: that we refer to positions, ministries or ridings.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Premier doesn't have a plan, but don't take my word for it; take the word of the energy minister, who recently confessed in a media interview that, "We're in the process now of putting together our long-term energy plan." Seven years in office. There used to be a plan but George Smitherman ripped it up four years ago.

The McGuinty Liberals are making families pay hundreds of dollars more for their hydro rate increases, Samsung deals, windmills, back-door energy tax and an HST on top of it all. How could you, Premier, have taken families down this path without a plan?

Hon. Brad Duguid: That is almost laughable coming from the other side of the House. What we've been talking about over the last number of years is our plan to build a stronger, more stable and cleaner energy system. Maybe the member hasn't heard of the Green Energy Act, which is creating thousands of megawatts of clean energy in this province. Maybe the member hasn't heard about our plan to get off coal by the year 2014, which is going to be cleaning our air and improving our health. Maybe the member hasn't heard about the 8,000 megawatts of power that we have brought on—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The same comment I made in regard to the leader of the third party—I think the honourable member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke would like to hear the answer as well.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind all members, again, to have that respect for the discourse of the question and the answer. Please continue.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I find it hard to believe, after all this effort on behalf of Ontarians, on behalf of our government to transform the weak, unreliable and dirty system of energy that we inherited to a strong, reliable and clean system, that the member would not have

recognized this plan that we have had for a very long time in place—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. If the Premier and his finance minister had seriously considered the Expert Commission on Pensions recommendation for an Ontario pension agency and implemented it, Nortel workers would not be in the position they're in now. The mandate of that proposed agency was to deal precisely with these situations, ensuring pension stability and providing cost savings for taxpayers.

You had two years to implement your own expert's recommendation. Why didn't you?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member is wrong. It would not have done anything that he's suggesting. It's unfortunate that he doesn't want to acknowledge the fact that not only have we moved on, as I recall, almost 80% of the recommendations contained in that report, but what we are doing is trying to build more sustainable pensions for all Ontarians and ensure their proper regulation. We have looked very carefully at the proposal by some of the Nortel pensioners and rejected it because what it will do is make the \$2.5-billion vastly underfunded pension more risky. It will cause greater anxiety for pensioners, and in fact, it has been rejected by a number of those pensioners themselves, as well as people on disability who are not pensioners. You ought not to be exposing those people to greater risk on their future income and security.

We have taken the appropriate—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: The minister is totally wrong. Nortel pensioners negotiated in the courts an extension from March 30 to September 30 to continue to work with your level of government on a win-win alternative to windup by annuity, but your government has stalled them at every front, trying to run out the clock. The recommended financial sponsorship model will save the pension benefits guarantee fund about \$100 million. Why are you ignoring these savings by implementing the costly windup by annuity?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Because it will expose those people who are already paying too great a price to even greater risk. That's why the leaders of the disabled Nortel workers have said no to you. That's why the disabled workers at Nortel and other pensions have told you unequivocally that they don't want you to threaten the security of their pension.

This is an unfortunate circumstance. We have invested \$250 million in the pension benefits guarantee fund. That will likely protect the pension benefits of some 90% of Nortel retirees and future pensioners.

We cannot take risks like the member opposite wants to do. We've seen this movie before. People have been left exposed across a range of industries. We'll continue to build a stronger and better pension system based on the recommendations of Professor Arthurs and many others.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is directly to the Premier. You know that currently we have First Nations leaders out on the front lawn, we have mayors from northeastern Ontario, some of whom are with us here today, and we have chambers of commerce from across northern Ontario, who are all gathering on one issue, and that is to say, "Stop the process on Bill 191, the Far North planning act." None of them see this as a resolution to the issue that needs to be dealt with.

First Nations want a land use planning process, but one that protects their interests and something that allows, at the end of the day, certainty for those who are going to invest in the area in a way that makes sure that we protect our environment.

The question is to you, Premier. Are you prepared to put the brakes on this process and respect the new relationship that you say you have with First Nations?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm really pleased to answer the question, and I want to tell the member from Timmins—James Bay that we respect the rights of aboriginal people and we are happy that they are here to express their concerns in a respectful, peaceful and responsible manner.

We've been listening to their concerns for the last two years, in fact. I went up to the north this summer, visited eight communities and spent whole days listening to First Nations communities. We've listened during standing committee on Monday, and I was impressed with the level of discourse about the bill. I appreciated your suggestions on how the bill could be made better. I continue to listen. This is just the beginning of a listening dialogue with our First Nations communities, because we want to protect the north as well as provide environmental protection. The boreal forest is an extraordinarily important commitment for this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, if you're listening, why are they out on the front lawn? They're not here all the way from places like Kasabonika, Sandy Lake, Attawapiskat, Thunder Bay, Smooth Rock Falls, Timmins and other communities because they like what you're doing. They understand that the development of the Far North is important to northern Ontario, but we all understand in the north that if development is to happen, it has to be in a way that will benefit First Nations. This bill doesn't do that. So get off of this high horse, saying that you've consulted, because they're out on the front lawn telling you no.

I ask you again, will you do what we have suggested in the New Democratic Party and back off and go into a

process that allows us to get where we need to go at the end so that First Nations' interests are protected and the people of northern Ontario can also benefit from those economic activities?

1110

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Should Bill 191 pass, we believe that it will take concrete action to make a positive difference in the Far North. We understand that they need economic help and social help. This bill is going to provide the tools to provide that framework.

There's a lot of activity happening in the north. We know that the Ring of Fire is just one of those projects. There are going to be hydroelectricity projects and forestry projects. We need to give First Nations the capacity and the skills training. They need the resources to come into their community. Each individual chief has told me how interested they are in development coming to the north.

We believe this is the right thing to do. Our government is moving forward and having that conversation with First Nations communities. We know that it's important to protect the Far North. It's an asset, it's a jewel, and we need to protect it. This legislation will work with First Nations. We continue the dialogue.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. Minister, it's clear to all of us that a difficult economy means companies, investors and governments are facing very tough decisions on investments in uncertain times around the world. As we begin recovering from the economic downturn, the availability of venture capital is especially important, as banks have become more cautious in their lending and investors look to stable returns.

Innovative high-growth companies in the province are seeking venture capital funding to expand business opportunities and create jobs for Ontario families. They are companies like Energate in Ottawa that are looking to grow and prosper but need help raising capital.

Would the minister tell us what he is doing through his ministry to support these emerging companies that have an idea or product but lack sufficient funding?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is a centrepiece of our Open Ontario plan. In fact, we have created the \$250-million Ontario emerging technologies fund to co-invest with qualified investors in high-potential companies in three sectors: clean technologies, life sciences and advanced health technologies, and digital media.

To date, the Ontario Capital Growth Corp. has successfully closed and announced not one, not two, but eight investments under the OETF with Avvasi, Bering Media Inc., ecobee, EnviroTower, Energate, b5media, Morega Systems and Natrix Separations. We have already leveraged institutional investors, corporate investors and our partners in the federal government to establish a \$205-million Ontario venture capital fund, and Ontario has committed \$90 million towards that. This signals—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It is important that the government is committed to ensuring that Ontario, the economic engine of Canada, remains on the cutting edge of research and innovation. This is especially critical as we grow out of the great recession and compete with the world for new investments and jobs for the 21st century. We must compete vigorously with other jurisdictions like Quebec and British Columbia to leverage private investment money into Ontario business for the benefit of Ontario's economy and families.

I've been speaking with businesses in my riding and organizations such as OCRI, the Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation, about the challenge of leveraging venture capital. Could the minister tell my local innovators what this government is doing to support them in leveraging private venture capital?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We understand, in this government, that wealth is increasingly generated by the innovation economy and that our production economy's success is increasingly reliant on innovation. The \$65 million underlying the fund commitment is expected to raise between \$300 million and \$500 million in total funds from the three current Ontario funds in our Open Ontario plan, but it's sometimes more powerful to tell a story.

I'll give you one example: EnviroTower Inc., which I mentioned earlier, is a water treatment company with an environmentally sustainable solution to the challenges of using water cooling in towers, offices and other buildings. This technology typically delivers savings of 20% in water consumption and 15% in water cooling systems and jobs.

This is more investment in Ontario, this is direct forward investment, this is new jobs, and this is what Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, Premier McGuinty summed up why he is out of touch and why Ontario families can no longer afford him when he insisted Ontarians, including aboriginal communities, support his Far North Act. It's an odd thing to say given that he's scrapped public hearings, his northern caucus has cleared their seats in the backbench and northern Ontario families and aboriginal leaders have travelled to Queen's Park to protest against the bill.

Just who was in the room with Premier McGuinty who supported this bill? Or was the Premier looking into a mirror?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to answer this question. I'll admit I was disappointed when the hearings weren't going up north this summer, but it was a great

opportunity for me. I myself got to visit eight different communities, and I've chatted with at least 25 chiefs and counting about the legislation. I was very impressed with a lot of the presentations. We had elders, we had young people come out and talk about the legislation and how to improve it. A lot of that discussion informed the changes that we made to the bill.

We've done some very different things with this bill. In fact, we went out last summer and we've gone out this summer to get that advice from the First Nations community. We are listening. We continue to listen to First Nations communities. They've given us some very helpful suggestions on how to make this historic legislation.

This is about providing a balance between protecting the environment and allowing economic development to continue. It's a good thing to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again, to the Premier. Premier McGuinty hasn't even been in the same room as the aboriginal and northern Ontario families whose economic opportunities he's cutting in half. What the McGuinty Liberals offer families is scrapped consultations so he doesn't have to listen to them. The choice Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs are offering is respect, respect for families living in the north who want to prosper by exploring economic opportunities in their region—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will please come to order.

Mr. Steve Clark: You don't like to hear the truth.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Start the clock, and it's not helpful from the member from Leeds—Grenville.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Or the Minister of Economic Development. Please continue, honourable member.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The choice Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs are offering is respect, respect for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please. It is all about respect in here, and the same comments that I made I would ask that you do of your own leader and be conscious of that as well, too.

Mr. Randy Hillier: We offer respect for families living in the north who want to prosper by exploring economic opportunities in their region. They don't want their land base frozen into a massive park.

Premier McGuinty says northern Ontario families want this bill. They say they don't. Who's lying?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm really pleased to talk about Bill 191 because I think it's a commitment of our government that I am particularly proud of. It's going to do

three things: It's going to provide certainty for businesses on how they can operate in the Far North; it's going to give local First Nations a voice about where, when and if development will occur; and it will provide environmental protection for the boreal forest, which will assist Ontario in fighting climate change. Those are really good goals to have, and I would have thought that you would be supportive of that, but you just don't get it.

There are so many opportunities in the north, and we are particularly pleased with providing certainty to businesses as well as First Nations communities. We're going to work respectfully with our First Nations communities and northern communities. I have travelled the north, I continue to have that conversation and I appreciate the advice that you provide, but I'm going to keep working towards making sure that we provide—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The closure of Siemens Hamilton gas turbine plant is a blow to 550 workers, their families and the city's economy. Now Siemens is shopping for an Ontario location to manufacture wind turbines. The existing Hamilton plant is a logical location; it's the logical choice. Further to my recent letter to the Premier on this matter, I want to ask what steps he has taken to encourage Siemens to retool that Hamilton plant for wind turbine manufacturing.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just want to continue, first of all, to say that we very much value Siemens's investment in Ontario and we're going to continue to work with them to ensure they remain here. Obviously Hamilton is a very attractive locale. What I really want to point out as well is that the honourable member has been saying for some time now that she is opposed to our Green Energy Act, and now a company, which is exploring expansion here and doing work here on the very premise of our Green Energy Act, is looking for work here, looking for a location, and she's standing in favour of that.

So I'd just like her to get her story straight and decide whether she's in favour of the Green Energy Act or not. We are. We understand the financial upsides, the economic upsides, it has for our economy, and we'll continue to promote that.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think this Premier is quite aware that Siemens will receive millions of public dollars for the wind turbine manufacturing. I think he's quite aware of that. New Democrats believe that these public investments should actually come with strings attached. We've been saying that over and over and over again. Perhaps the Premier hasn't heard it.

Telling Siemens to return to the Milton Avenue plant in Hamilton, with its skilled CAW workers and road, rail and water links, makes perfect sense. The workers and their families simply want to know why the Premier

won't insist that Siemens do just that and invest in our community.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We believe Hamilton is a great place for anybody to invest. The members that we have representing that area have worked very hard to ensure that this government has invested in Hamilton in infrastructure and invested in Hamilton in energy, and we know the Green Energy Act is going to work for Hamilton as well.

I think the people of Hamilton would be very interested in this question because they would want to know that the leader of the opposition is trying to take credit for jobs that may go to her community, jobs that she did not support in the first place, jobs that she does not support to this day. That's something that I think would be important and of interest to the people of Hamilton. I think that's shameful.

WATER QUALITY

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. In my riding of Barrie, the ecological balance of the beautiful lakes in our community is a major concern and a major priority. All lakes, as you know, contain phosphorus, a natural, growing and occurring nutrient, that all things that live need to grow, but it has become—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. If there are issues pertaining to the question that was just asked previously and there is discussion that wants to continue, I think on behalf of all the members I would prefer that discussion to take place in one of the outer chambers or outside so that it doesn't interfere in the business of the House.

Please continue.

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: Concerning phosphorus, it has become far too abundant in Lake Simcoe and, indeed, results in excessive plant growth. I know, talking this summer to fishermen and talking to cottagers, that it's an ongoing problem, that there's a lot of concern about that, worry about the declining fish population and other ecosystem damage.

I'm wondering if the minister can please tell this House if the McGuinty government is serious about taking action to protect Lake Simcoe.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I can assure my friend that we are absolutely committed to protecting Lake Simcoe. That is why we brought in the Lake Simcoe Protection Act. I would note that there has been no stronger advocate in this House than my colleague and friend the MPP for Barrie on this issue.

She is absolutely correct: It is about making sure that we reduce the amount of phosphorus going into the lake so it is restored to its ecological health. That's why we have a phosphorus reduction plan that sees the phosphorus going into the lake reduced from the current level,

which is 72 tonnes per year, to 44 tonnes per year. That's a reduction of some 40%.

It's that key point that is necessary. We need everyone within the community, everyone within the lakeshed of Lake Simcoe to play their part. We will play our part through the act and through the regulations to ensure that we have that balance that is required by Mother Nature so that we can enjoy Lake Simcoe for many, many years to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: My constituents will be pleased to know that the McGuinty government remains committed to taking action to clean up and protect the lake, and they'll be happy, indeed, to know that the phosphorus reduction strategy is only one part of a larger plan.

As you mentioned, the larger Lake Simcoe Protection Act enshrined watershed protection into law and will clean up Lake Simcoe, protecting it for the next generation. But phosphorus reduction alone isn't enough. Can you please share with the House and my constituents—very important—a progress update on the Lake Simcoe Protection Act and what else you're going to do to protect this beautiful lake?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I thank my friend for the supplementary because under the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, which was proclaimed in the House on June 2, 2009, we have the concept of having a protection plan. We were able to get some wonderful recommendations about what we need to do to go forward, some 119 recommendations. I'm proud to share with the House that we have some 88 of those recommendations in the first year already in place or under way.

I can remind the member that we have established a Lake Simcoe science committee and a Lake Simcoe coordinating committee to provide guidance and expertise on the protection efforts. It's important that it's always based on sound science. We've released the Lake Simcoe water quality report, which provides baseline information for the past 29 years of water quality monitoring of the lake, to make sure that information is available, and we are implementing a state-of-the-art fisheries and aquatic biodiversity monitoring—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I have a question for the Premier. Premier, I want to talk to you about the sorry mess of the pensions from Nortel. This particular pension plan is going to be handed over to you on September 30. Let us remember that \$2.5 billion of this pension plan is their money; it's not the government's money. The pensioners have met with me and many members of this Legislature, and I do not take away from the intent of any member of this Legislature to try to do the best we can with, I say, the sorry state of affairs. The pensioners, though, are frustrated because they have presented an

alternative to you, the financial sponsorship model, but the answers they have received back don't make sense to them or their experts.

This is not a partisan issue. This is dealing with 12,000 Ontarians and—

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member raises a very valid concern and has spoken and worked hard on this issue, and I acknowledge his efforts on that, as have a number of our other colleagues in this House. It is a very bad situation.

I've met with them; a number of my officials have, a number of our members. We've examined the proposal. We believe that the reason for the disagreement among the pensioners themselves is that in fact the proposal puts that \$2.5 billion at higher risk. That's why particularly the disabled former Nortel employees, many of whom have not achieved retirement age, are opposed to this. That's why a number of pension actuaries we have consulted with say this is too high-risk a strategy and that in fact it will not enhance the future pension security of Nortel employees. We did put \$250 million into the pension benefits guarantee fund—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Mr. Minister, 37 of 400 disabled employees support your solution; 37 of 18,000 pensioners support your solution. So let's not misrepresent the support that they have for your plan. This is their money. The \$2.5 billion is their money, not the government's money. We believe that the government owes an obligation to justify their rejection of this plan. Premier, will you set up a select committee of this Legislature or another system of consultation or mediation to review this expert testimony in public so that both sides can reach a reasonable conclusion?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The \$2.5 billion does remain their money. The member knows that and he's well aware of that. This FSM buyout model has been looked at and experimented with in other places. Let me just share with the member a quote: "In sum, non-insured pension buyouts are now viewed with suspicion by nearly all stakeholder groups in the UK today. Even the buyout providers themselves acknowledge that non-insured buyouts are not viable in the short to medium term. According to one buyout provider, 'Insurance is the answer; not trying to do some dodgy deal.' Another buyout provider said, 'This is a failed business model.'" This is from leading experts in the UK who have looked at this model.

What we are intent on doing is ensuring that the vast majority of Nortel pensioners continue to receive a substantial—indeed, close to 90% of their pension income.

1130

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. The Minister of Community and Social Services prom-

ised to consult "partners in the poverty community" before replacing the special diet allowance. The Minister of Health never made such a promise, and in fact, groups like 25 in 5 have never been consulted. Will the Premier confirm that the government will listen to the views of groups like 25 in 5 and, more importantly, to low-income people who rely on the allowance before making drastic cuts to the program?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you very much for this question. It's a very important question. As you know, this ministry is always in consultation with people in the poverty sector to help us make the right decisions. It's not an easy process. It's not an easy decision, as you know, but this government wanted to make sure that we are doing the right thing. That's why we have at the table these experts on poverty, and we will continue to consult them.

I have moved forward with this consultation to review the poverty area and especially the welfare benefits and ODSP benefits that this government is providing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: When this government was consulting last year, 25 in 5 were the experts. Now they won't be consulted at all.

The McGuinty government says that it is committing to building a healthy Ontario. The reality is that the McGuinty government is quietly planning to take millions of dollars out of the pockets of thousands of poor and vulnerable people with diabetes, health conditions, heart conditions, HIV and hypertension, taking away their last hope of staying remotely healthy by reducing the amount of money they have for healthy food.

My question: Why won't the Premier or his ministers stand up for the poor and those with health challenges and provide a guarantee that no one receiving the allowance today will be left worse off than they are now?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This is a great question, but no, I cannot stand up today and say that those who are receiving special diet today will be receiving it in the future. Along with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the ministry responsible for poverty, we are all working together to make sure that those who are in need of special diet will receive it, but not everyone who is receiving it today will receive it.

We have a report from the Auditor General that this program is unsustainable. We started in 2003 with a \$6-million expenditure on that. It is now \$240 million and it's growing. This program is unsustainable. We are reviewing it and we will come up with another program that I hope will be sustainable.

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Minister, broadband Internet access is viewed today as essential infrastructure for both our social and economic

well-being. While urban residents have had access to powerful broadband connections for years, many residents in our most remote and rural communities have not realized the same benefit. Given the importance of being connected in today's day and age, access to broadband infrastructure should be available to as many Ontarians as possible. Building broadband connectivity for Ontario's rural families and businesses opens up new economic opportunity, investment attraction and citizen engagement in rural Ontario. In the great riding of Peterborough, local municipalities are looking to attract new businesses, but often barriers, including access to fast Internet connections, stand in the way of companies deciding to locate in our area. Can the minister let this House know about the steps the government has taken to ensure access to broadband infrastructure?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: The McGuinty government is committed to investing in broadband infrastructure. We know that broadband connectivity investment will bring more industry to rural regions and it will create jobs that will help our rural communities prosper.

Our government continues to address gaps in Ontario through strategic investments, and one of the investments I want to speak to specifically is the investment in eastern Ontario, \$55 million that was funded through a regional broadband proposal from the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus. Last month, we announced that the rural broadband network—they're ready to begin construction.

To put it in context, this large-scale broadband project is a major achievement in eastern Ontario. It will service an estimated one million—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I know the warden of Peterborough county, J. Murray Jones, wants to thank the minister.

My constituents will be pleased to know that our government is working to provide them with further opportunities to connect socially and commercially. The ability to connect through broadband infrastructure will allow for the continued success and prosperity of rural Ontario.

Funding for the eastern Ontario broadband project is just one of the many investments made by this government to create more opportunities for rural Ontarians to take a leading role in Ontario's new economy. Minister, can you please tell this House about some of the other programs available to support and assist rural Ontario?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Thank you for the question, and I can tell you, I will enthusiastically respond. A strong rural Ontario makes the whole province stronger. We get that. But I want to speak to the accomplishments to date: 282 rural economic development projects, a \$103-million investment—that's generating over \$771 million in investments; 280 COMRIF projects—that represents a \$298-million investment, generating an additional \$900 million in investments; and 28,000 students in rural Ontario found summer jobs through our rural summer jobs program.

We get it on this side of the House. A stronger rural Ontario makes the whole province prosper, and we have demonstrated that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Premier. Back in 2007, the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government signed the Flow agreement on the future of transportation in Ontario. As part of that agreement, Premier, you promised that the province would extend the 407 all the way through to Highway 35/115 by 2013. In fact, in December 2007, David Caplan restated the province's promise—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I remind that we refer to members. The clock has stopped, but I just remind you again.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much.

Now your government has broken its promise by telling us the extension will only be completed to Simcoe Street in Oshawa, and only by 2015. We're going to get half the highway and it's going to take two years longer.

This is a matter of trust. Will the Premier be a man of his word and reaffirm his commitment to the completion of Highway 407 the entire distance, to 35/115, by 2013?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: On behalf of the government, I will certainly reaffirm our commitment to completing the highway to 35/115. I think in this time of economic downturn it's remarkable that we're able to go ahead and do this first stage.

The member opposite knows perfectly well that the first part of the 407 was built in stages. We are building the second part of the 407. We're going to take it out, this first piece. We know it needs to go to Highway 35/115. The environmental assessment has been completed all that way. Properties are being purchased as we speak. We will get there, but we've got to do it right and we've got to get the first stage done.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: The full agreement was an investment not just in the 407, but in a transportation strategy that included the Spadina subway to Vaughan, as well as the York train system. The federal member, Colin Carrie, recently told Durham region media that unless the Premier makes good on his promise, some of his federal colleagues will be calling for the suspension of the Flow funding from the federal side of the agreement.

Our federal government has been able to keep their word on the Flow agreement. Why can't the Premier keep his word? Is the Premier willing to throw away millions of dollars out of the federal government by not keeping his word?

I'll put the question to the Premier one time: Will the Premier simply keep his word on this promise?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are going ahead with all of the projects that were part of the Flow agreement: the Highway 404 extension, the Highway 7 widening, the

Highway 407 extension to Highway 35/115—all of those are going ahead.

I think it's absolutely consistent with this party's position that it would threaten—and that's what it is—threaten to stop, threaten to cut, threaten to pull back. What we're doing is, we're moving ahead. We've made the commitment to Highway 35/115, getting the 407 out that far. We've done the environmental assessment. We're going to do the first stage.

As I said, I think it is a testament to our commitment to transportation in this province and to infrastructure that in this time of economic downturn, even when projects are very costly, we are going ahead. We've made that commitment. We're going to get going on the first stage of the 407.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Brad Duguid: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to correct something that I may have said regarding one of my responses. I think I said there are 8,000 smart meters installed; there are actually 4.1 million smart meters installed. There are 8,000 meters which are on time-of-use pricing. I just wanted to correct that to be sure.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Charles Sousa: I rise today to recognize some executive directors of Nortel Retirees and former employees Protection Canada who are here on the front lawns today. Please welcome Mr. Ron Olsen, an actuary; Mike Moorcroft, who's the chair of GTA membership; and Ray Hounsell, who's the Quebec chair.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I also want to introduce the national chair of the Nortel Retirees and former employees Protection Canada, Don Sproule, who lives in the great riding of Ottawa Centre—welcome, Don—and also Frank Mills, who is a director of NRPC Canada.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John O'Toole: This afternoon, I want to continue with my standing up in support of seniors. I want to bring up a very important issue that is constantly coming up in my riding of Durham. That is the issue of the lack of alternatives for seniors who are in the hospital. In the hospitals they call it ALC, alternate level of care.

Mr. Speaker, you would know, as most members should know, that now under Premier McGuinty's government,

they're charging people to stay in the hospital when they've been determined as being alternate level of care. They're handing the—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Algoma should pay attention because they are handing people bills of up to \$1,000 a day. These are our senior citizens, in many cases veterans.

The reason for that is they're allowed to put five preferred long-term-care homes. Now, these homes, by the way, could be way out of the community, and the care providers would have a long drive to visit and support these individuals.

The point I'm trying to make is that they have not, to any extent, built any long-term-care homes. Another sign—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: That's not true.

Mr. John O'Toole: You'll have a chance to speak.

Another sign is that they have also started to regulate retirement homes. Retirement homes don't have one nickel of provincial money in them. They are ignoring the seniors of Ontario, and I'm standing up to make sure that the members on the government side who wish to make a point stand up—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is with great pleasure that I stand in the Legislature today and commend members of the Oakville community for the celebration they organized this summer to mark the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Navy.

In particular, I would like to recognize Oakville resident Lieutenant Glenn Woolfrey, who put together the local celebration and presented a framed display of the HMCS Oakville to teach us a little bit about a not-well-known part of our town's history.

Since 1910, more than 300 Canadian Navy ships have been named for communities across Canada, and that includes the HMCS Oakville. In August 1942 during the Second World War, the HMCS Oakville had its defining moment as it captured an enemy submarine and its crew after the submarine had attacked a convoy between Cuba and Haiti. The destruction of the U-boat and the capture of its crew was cause for celebration across the country, particularly in Oakville where 2,000 people came out to celebrate from a total town population at the time of only 4,000.

Once again, I would like to thank Lieutenant Woolfrey and those involved, including TOWARF, the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps of Oakville, Scouts Oakville, Burloak Legion and T.A. Blakelock High School for their efforts to celebrate the Royal Canadian Navy's centennial and for keeping our town's history alive and vibrant.

GORD HUNTER

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I want to say thank you to Ottawa city councillor Gord Hunter for 30 years of public service.

I've worked with Councillor Hunter for a decade, first as a young staffer at Ottawa city hall and now the MPP for Nepean—Carleton. On many occasions I've called upon him for advice on planning matters and community issues. I know I can always count on getting the straight goods from Councillor Hunter.

At city hall, he's known for his common sense and frankness around the council table when it comes to tax dollars. These qualities have served him well, as well as our constituents, over the years.

Councillor Hunter was a teacher at Confederation high school when he entered politics. He first represented Nepean, then the regional municipality of Ottawa—Carleton. He then handily won three terms at the new city of Ottawa. He was also the standard-bearer for the Liberal Party in Nepean—Carleton on a few occasions.

But city hall needed him, and Councillor Hunter has championed many of the projects that have helped Nepean become one of the greatest communities in the city of Ottawa, a place where families love to work, play and live. His legacy includes community institutions like the Nepean Sportsplex, Andrew Haydon Park, Ben Franklin Park, the new city of Nepean town hall and bike lanes on all arterial roads in Ottawa.

He's an avid sportsman, and I felt privileged and honoured to bestow upon him the 2010 Nepean—Carleton sports builder award.

I've always respected and admired Councillor Hunter. I will miss working with him, but in his retirement, I want him to know I will continue to call on him for advice from time to time.

On behalf of this Legislature, the people of Knoxdale—Merivale and the people in Nepean—Carleton and the city of Ottawa, I want to say thank you, Gord Hunter, for all you've done for our community.

SHANE WAKEFORD

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I rise today not only as the member for Timmins—James Bay to give somebody a congratulations for a job well done—but to my son-in-law who ran the Ironman in Louisville, Kentucky and finished the Ironman coming in 630th out of 3,000 people.

Applause.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got to say I find it absolutely amazing that anybody would want to run the Ironman in the first place—when you look at me. But I'm extremely proud, both as the father-in-law, but also as a provincial member of Parliament representing the riding of Timmins—James Bay.

He has worked really hard in order to train for this particular event. He has been doing biking, running, swimming and five-hour marathon runs, and has to do it

hours at a time. He has been doing all this stuff for the better part of a year and for him to go down to Louisville and to do us proud—Canada, Ontario and the city of Timmins. I say to my son-in-law, "Mr. Wakeford, job well done; we're very proud of you."

As the Legislature of Ontario, we congratulate you on the well-deserved applause that we have just given you when it comes to this pretty amazing thing. On behalf of all of the Legislature, congratulations.

EASTERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Last week, I had the pleasure of participating in an eastern Ontario development fund announcement in my riding.

1510

Through the EODF, our government is helping 417 Bus Line, a bus provider based in Casselman, to expand their operation to include a full-service maintenance and training facility. Also, 417 Bus Line will invest a total of \$4.9 million to construct a new building with environmental upgrades, provide training in marketing and engineering to staff, hire 10 new mechanics and apprentices, and expand their coach bus service in eastern Ontario and western Quebec. As well, 417 Bus Line will retain 100 jobs with this project. The province is providing over \$139,000 through the EODF to support the company's investment.

Working with local business organizations is a key component of the Open Ontario plan. To date, the EODF has announced over \$24 million to 52 projects that have created 735 new jobs. As a result of this province's comprehensive tax package, the tax on business investment in Ontario is being cut in half, making Ontario businesses more competitive.

Quel plaisir de représenter les gens de Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

BUILDING PERMITS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: On July 1, we were hit with the HST, an additional tax on a wide range of goods and services. One such service is home renovations. Building permits are generally required for renovations that involve a change to the structure of your home. It is the homeowner's legal responsibility to get all required permits. If you hire a contractor, you can make arrangements for the contractor to do this for you. Your contract should specify what permits are required and who is responsible for obtaining them. Regrettably, a fallout of the HST is that many renovation jobs have been pushed to the underground economy to avoid paying the HST. If these illegitimate operators are working for cash to avoid the HST, they are presumably avoiding other legal requirements, and this puts homeowners at risk.

If you carry out a home renovation project without a building permit, your municipality can issue a stop-work order, you may have to redo your project or you could be forced to re-renoate or restore your home to its original

condition. In the event of you selling your home, the buyer's due diligence will reveal the unpermitted renovations, and this will complicate the sale until this is resolved.

Don't be tempted to forgo a building permit. Protect yourself and ensure that your renovations are done according to the building code.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to speak about an event I had the pleasure to attend yesterday, and that was the reopening of the Victoria Park subway station and its renovations. This event occurred yesterday. Bus terminals and other parts of the subway station were improved. Among the improvements were a new six-bay bus terminal, better station access with widened entrances, new sidewalks, a ramp, elevators and more. The provincial gas tax funding has helped make these improvements to the Victoria Park subway station possible.

Since 2003, the McGuinty government has invested more than \$10.8 billion in public transit across Ontario. That includes \$3.7 billion to the city of Toronto to improve and expand transit. These investments have led to increased transit ridership of nearly 110 million passenger trips across the province, have encouraged carpooling to occur, have reduced congestion and have also improved air quality in this province.

Ontario's gas program was introduced in 2004 and, to date, more than \$1.6 billion has been given to Ontario municipalities for public transit improvement. The McGuinty government has committed more than \$848 million in gas tax funding to the city of Toronto, and I am pleased that a portion of this was able to go to the riding of Scarborough Southwest.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Bob Delaney: Ontario is innovating again, this time to enhance learning among our preschool children. Full-day kindergarten, which began across the province last week, is the latest of many initiatives to help our province's families and ensure that the next generation of Ontarians reach their full potential and succeed in life in the 21st century. This investment in our future will further sharpen Ontario's existing competitive advantage. According to the Centre for Spatial Economics, full-day learning will provide a greater economic benefit in the long term than its investment costs in the short term.

Some 35,000 Ontario four- and five-year-old students in almost 600 schools began full-day learning this month. In years to come, full-day learning will expand across Ontario. This means more working opportunities for stay-at-home parents. It means more children getting a head start in life and learning in a safe school system.

Hard-working Ontario families know that full-day kindergarten equips our young children for greater success in life. These kids will have the 21st-century skills Ontario needs to compete in the global economy.

The experts agree, and the rest of the world is coming to Ontario to see what our province does right in full-day kindergarten for our kids.

EDUCATION

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This past weekend, educators from several countries around the world came to Ontario to attend an education summit. Since 2003, over 437 international delegations involving over 4,000 visitors have come to Ontario to learn about Ontario's education reforms and successes.

Education is an important part of this government's Open Ontario plan. Our government has made significant investments to strengthen Ontario's education system. Test scores are up, class sizes are down and more and more students are graduating.

This summit coincides with a very exciting time in the history of Ontario as this government launches full-day kindergarten in almost 600 schools across the province, which will provide our children with a strong foundation and help them reach their full potential.

Next fall, Ontarians will have a clear choice to make: to support a government that will move forward with improvements to education, or go back to the failed policies of the past that have failed our children, our parents and our teachers.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Bob Delaney: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to standing order 111(b).

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Delaney presents the committee's report. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Bob Delaney: No, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 111(b), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NARCOTICS SAFETY AND AWARENESS ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ET LA SENSIBILISATION EN MATIÈRE DE STUPÉFIANTS

Ms. Matthews moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled

substances / **Projet de loi 101, Loi prévoyant la surveillance des activités liées à la prescription et à la préparation de certaines substances désignées.**

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the minister wish to make a short statement?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will make my statement during ministerial statements.

1520

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Introduction of bills? The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Kuldip Kular: I move that leave be given to introduce a bill entitled World Water Day Act, 2010, and that it now be read for the first time.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No, we need some more information.

ARTHUR WISHART AMENDMENT ACT (FRANCHISE DISCLOSURE), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI ARTHUR WISHART SUR LA DIVULGATION RELATIVE AUX FRANCHISES

Ms. Jaczek moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 102, An Act to amend the Arthur Wishart Act (Franchise Disclosure), 2000 / **Projet de loi 102, Loi modifiant la Loi Arthur Wishart de 2000 sur la divulgation relative aux franchises.**

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I do. This bill, which is co-sponsored by the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka and the member for Parkdale–High Park, amends the Arthur Wishart Act (Franchise Disclosure), 2000, to require a franchisor to provide a prospective franchisee with an educational document containing specified information. Before entering into the agreement, the prospective franchisee is required to provide the franchisor with a signed, written acknowledgement that the franchisee has examined the educational document.

BIG BAY RESORT ASSOCIATION ACT, 2010

Ms. Munro moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr38, An Act respecting Big Bay Resort Association.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There is no statement after that.

JACK JOHNSON

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in remembrance of the late John McLellan “Jack” Johnson.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On behalf of the New Democratic caucus and our leader, Andrea Horwath, I want to rise and say a few words today in the Legislature in regard to Jack Johnson.

First elected to this place in 1975, Mr. Johnson, from what I know from reading in preparation for this statement, was a person who had served in the local level of government for some years. He was known as a pretty honest, hard-working kind of guy, but what he was known for was as a guy with a big heart.

He was one of those rare individual politicians who happen to come along and understand that at the end of the day it's not just about serving your constituents but sometimes being civil to each other. In this place, if you've been here around question period, you will see that sometimes we forget that as a lesson.

One of the things I saw as I was preparing was that he was one of those fellows who wore his heart on his sleeve to a certain extent. The politics he brought to this Legislature were those of a hard-working MPP but somebody who also basically took things from the perspective of knowing that at the end of the day we're all human beings. We all come here with our own reasons, but at the end of the day we need to respect each other. I think that's something that not only served him well but something I think we can all learn from.

He is one of those rare individuals who, yes, came here on a bit of a sweep with Conservatives at one point, when the Conservatives were in power for so many years at the time. But when the sweep went the other way, and as the tide went down, his boat was still floating, as we say. He remained in the Legislature beyond the time of the Conservatives being in government. When the fortunes were not so good for the Conservative Party, Mr. Johnson was able to hold on to his seat and remain in this Legislature for some 15 years.

One of the reasons was, as I read it—and I understand this, because it's something like—I don't want to say I'm anything like him or he was anything like me; that's not my point. He understood that politics was local. What he was trying to do was get people to remember that decisions made here at Queen's Park sometimes aren't necessarily the right decisions for people back home. He always tried to bring some way of being able to make the point that we needed to get decisions to be more in line with what was happening back home. He was known as a bit of a crusader when it came to that particular brand of politics, of making sure we don't get caught up in the

machinations of what happens in cabinet, the machinations of what happens in a caucus or even what happens in the Legislature, but that we understand in the end that what we need is to have decisions that reflect the values of where we come from and protect those interests of the people we represent. That is something I understand quite well and probably one of the reasons that served him very well as well.

The other thing is that he was a Conservative in the way that—we expect Conservatives to be friendly to business and see that as an important issue, but he was from the perspective of small business. He understood the family farm and those people who work hard in our communities, running individual businesses. The moms and pops, as we know them today and as we knew them back then, are the people who truly are the sort of unsung heroes of the economy, and they need to have champions in this Legislature. I understand that well, because Mr. Johnson was right: These people work hard, they're honest, they do everything they can to succeed, and whatever little money they make in their ventures, either on the family farm or in their local businesses, is money that's spun back into the local economy. He was known as a champion for those individuals because he understood, as others probably do, that at the end of the day the big guys got the bucks, they got the lawyers, they got the consultants. They have all the stuff they need to survive. What people need at the family farm level, and what people need in small business, is some champions not only in this Legislature but outside, to be able to make sure their issues are heard and that at the end of the day they're able to also have an impact when it comes to public policy. That's something he believed in very, very much.

He was a family man, and unfortunately, in that time of politics it was different. We didn't have the constituency offices that we have today; we didn't have the type of support that we have as members. He had to do a lot of the work himself and with his wife, Marnie, who has passed away, be able to represent the work that he did here at Queen's Park back into the constituency. It meant that it took a certain toll on his family. We all know, as members of the Legislature, that although it's a really great calling to get involved in public office, for those of us who are lucky enough to be elected once and then re-elected a number of times, it's going to take a toll on the family. Certainly that was the case with Mr. Johnson, because he had a number of children who saw him from afar at times and would rather have had him come to their events that they had back home and to be part of the decisions and the experience that it is to have a family. Mr. Johnson, unfortunately, at times had to be away because of the way the Legislative calendar was back then, away from his family with less of an ability to get back home, as much as he would want to. We have here in the gallery—oh, my God, all of you are here, the entire family. The entire community is here for Mr. Johnson.

1530

I just want to say, on behalf of New Democrats and Madam Andrea Horwath, the leader of the New Demo-

cratic Party, we'd like to welcome Reverend Colin Johnson, who is here—if you would stand?—along with his other son, Paul Johnson; the daughter, Sheri Johnson; and their extended family. They're here in order to celebrate with us his time in the Legislature.

We say to you, as members of this assembly: Thank you for having lent us your father, your friend, your community friend and member. We thank you for the time he was here, we salute the work that he has done, and we salute you. Thank you.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm deeply honoured to be able to pay tribute to Jack Johnson.

When you're doing so, the research people always provide you with information on all the different committees he happened to sit on, when he was elected and when he wasn't. Well, to me, with Jack Johnson, that's—I won't say it's irrelevant, but it's much more personal with Jack because he and I were extremely good friends in the House.

He brought a different demeanour to politics that I think we could all emulate with some satisfaction, and we'd be viewed by the general public in a different way were we to follow Jack Johnson's manner in which he carried out his responsibilities as a member of provincial Parliament. He reminds me a bit of another person from southwestern Ontario, if I can call that southwestern Ontario appropriately, and that's Hugh Edighoffer, because both of them were haberdashers. Both of them owned menswear shops in the communities from which they came and both, again, were very popular with members of the House. If you sat on a committee with Jack Johnson, you sat on the committee with a friend, and you had a lot of chats, not just about the material that was before the committee but a lot of other things.

Jack was, indeed, a strong Conservative. To say that he was a red Tory or another kind of Tory—Jack was a Progressive Conservative. He was very loyal to his party, but he always understood the viewpoints of others in the House, whether they were from the left, centre or right, and he respected very much his colleagues in the House. He taught one person in this House extremely well, and I'll break the rule the Speaker has set, if you allow me to, to say Ted Arnott is the person—I'm going to break the rule and use his name, the member for Waterloo—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Wellington—Halton Hills.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Yes, Wellington—Halton Hills, now. Because Ted Johnson is—Ted Johnson. I almost put it that way. That's how close they are. He actually worked for Jack, as some of you will know, and it's easy to say "Ted Johnson" because they are almost precisely the same. One of the nicest personalities you will find in this House today is Ted Arnott. One of the nicest personalities you would find in the days of Jack Johnson was Jack Johnson himself, of course.

It showed in the family. I've had the opportunity to meet certain members of the family in certain capacities: the president of the Ontario Good Roads Association, and I know there is an archbishop there as well. So the family has gone on, and I know he'd appreciate each and every

one of the children, the grandchildren and perhaps the great-grandchildren, brothers and sisters and so on.

They can be justifiably proud, because Jack was the ultimate constituency person. He was an individual who saw no problem as being too small a problem for his constituents to bring that problem to Queen's Park: directly to Premier Davis at the time if he felt it was necessary, but certainly to the committees of the Legislature, to the House as a whole and to individual colleagues who were members of the cabinet at the time.

People write different columns about the demeanour in politics. We've seen this federally and provincially, and we see it in the United States. Jack came from an era where there was much more collegiality that took place within partisan politics than is the case today. That's something we can't roll back, but it is something we can look back upon with a good deal of envy. But it comes from the personality of the individual. It comes from the upbringing of the individual. The family has been involved, as Jack was, and not just in politics, because he was involved in politics at the local level and then at the provincial level. By the way, he never decided to go to the national level because all of us in this House know that the provincial level of government—the provincial representatives—are much closer to the day-to-day challenges, problems and opportunities that people have than the people who serve at the federal level. I'm not being disrespectful of them, but I think we recognize this in this House.

It was with much regret that I learned of his passing. I know that my friend who's in the riding where Jack resided knocked on his door during the campaign and was greeted very nicely. Even though he was a Liberal, he was greeted nicely and given much advice by Jack Johnson on that occasion. He was not afraid to give his advice on many issues.

I want to thank the family for sharing Jack with us for so many years in this Legislature. Ontario is a better place because he was in this House, his constituency is a better place and politics has a better name because Jack Johnson was part of that political scene.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Jack Johnson once told me that during his time at Queen's Park he often wondered whether he deserved to be here. While Jack may have had his personal doubts, which were really just an extension of his characteristic modesty and decency, his constituents had no doubts whatsoever about the man who voiced their hopes and views in this place from 1975 to 1990. In fact, his constituents loved him.

It was hard not to love Jack Johnson, for his heart was as big as it was good. Jack's spirit left this earth about 15 months ago, but today we remember Jack Johnson, the elected public servant who served his people well.

He was a public servant, yes, but also a tireless and hard-working politician. In fact, he liked to tell a story about one of his election campaigns when he attended a record 16 events in one day in his huge, sprawling riding of Wellington-Dufferin-Peel. Unfortunately, in order to make those 16 events, he also received three speeding

tickets that same day—no doubt, another personal best, one that he was somewhat less likely to mention.

I consider myself very, very fortunate to have had the chance to work with Jack, first as a volunteer in his last two election campaigns, in 1985 and 1987, and later as his assistant, working in his constituency office from 1987 until he retired three years later. Those years working with Jack were formative ones that I'll never, ever forget.

Warren Buffett recently wrote in tribute to his late friend and mentor Benjamin Graham, "More than any other man except my father, he influenced my life." I could easily say the same of Jack, but in my case it's perhaps an understatement. He was very much my mentor, a real political hero for the man that he was and the way he approached his responsibilities. He was as good of a friend as I've ever had.

Just as the Great Depression was beginning to tighten its grip in 1930, John McLellan Johnson was born in Detroit, Michigan, where his father had found work. But before long, the young family had moved back home to Mount Forest, where Jack and his twin brother, Dan, grew up. After high school, Jack studied business at Ryerson in Toronto. Upon graduation, he founded Johnson's Menswear, which became a fixture on Main Street of Mount Forest for the next 30 years.

In 1951, he married the love of his life, Marnie Johnston. They were very much partners in business as well as life, working side by side as their business grew and prospered. Marnie supported him in every way. They were inseparable. In every sense, they were a team.

Through the early years of their marriage, there were likely many ups and downs, but they were blessed with three children: Colin, Paul and Sheri. The growing family moved to their beautiful 19th-century Victorian home on Queen Street in Mount Forest.

Always an outgoing optimist, Jack firmly believed that you needed to get involved in your community to make it better. Leadership on the local school board, in his church, the chamber of commerce and the Lions Club were all integral to Jack's civic participation as he fulfilled this obligation to his community.

That obligation, however, brought Jack and Marnie a great deal of personal satisfaction. In fact, they both loved it. Always interested in government and politics, he was elected to town council, later becoming mayor of Mount Forest, and he focused his efforts on industrial development and growth. Through his leadership, numerous manufacturing businesses were enticed to set up operations in Mount Forest, creating literally hundreds of jobs in town.

Then, upon the retirement of long-time and well-respected MPP John Root in 1975, Jack was persuaded to seek the PC nomination in Wellington-Dufferin-Peel to succeed him.

1540

Regional government was, as Jack saw it, the major issue in that election. In fact, the basis of his campaign was to oppose his own party, which at the time was

promoting the extension of regional government. Jack stood fast by his beliefs, refusing to accept the party line on regional government, and demonstrated the courage and conviction that became his hallmark in the communities he served in the Legislature through 15 years as an MPP.

In this place, what goes around comes around, as we know. Jack respected everyone in this House, and in return was liked and respected by members of all three parties.

He once told me that when he was first elected as an MPP, he considered himself to be relatively right-wing. But as we all know, these kinds of labels have their limitations. His views evolved to include strong support for a minimum wage that workers could live on. He supported training and help for those in poverty, and better services for seniors, the disabled and veterans, among other priorities. He came to believe and proudly asserted that he was a fiscal conservative with a social conscience.

That social conscience led to him to one of his proudest accomplishments when he pushed the government to retrofit multi-storey seniors' residences with elevators—elevators that he thought should have been included in the original design of the buildings. Jack was appalled when he learned that a constituent in Hillsburgh who had fallen and broken her hip couldn't return home to her seniors' apartment to recuperate because she lived on the second floor of a building that had no elevator. Jack raised the issue repeatedly and persistently in the House, motivated not by the desire to gain political credit but only to convince the government to get the elevators installed and fix the problem. Finally, after much advocacy, the government listened and set aside the money to meet this need. Not surprisingly, Jack didn't take public credit for himself, but instead took private satisfaction that his efforts made a big difference. That was Jack Johnson.

He also believed in the concept of local autonomy, as he called it. The province, he believed, must respect local councils as mature governments in their own right. He always fought hard to help the local governments in his riding, rightly reasoning if he could help a council he would be helping an entire community.

Within our caucus, he was the longest-serving chair of caucus in memory, serving in this capacity for nine years straight. He disliked having to cut off his more long-winded colleagues, but he did so when necessary, as a good chair must, to keep the agenda flowing. He served on many legislative committees and enjoyed that aspect of the job very much, especially during the minority government of 1977 to 1981. This was, he told me, the most meaningful Legislature in which he had served. In those years, he remarked, people worked together across party lines, when there was a degree of personal respect demonstrated across the aisle in the House and consensus ruled instead of confrontation. Imagine that.

In retirement after 1990, Jack was appointed to the Canada Pension Plan appeal board and later the Alcohol

and Gaming Commission. On another occasion he was appointed to a committee to help displaced workers who were laid off after a large plant closure in Mount Forest.

He was always in demand as an informal political consultant, which meant that almost every aspiring politician in our area, including John Wilkinson, would want to go to seek his advice, which he offered generously to all comers, irrespective of their political stripe. I benefited from that advice through the years too, and to this day when I'm working with my staff, I often preface my instructions with, "Jack Johnson would have done it this way."

He always told me to be my own man, not beholden or defined by my party leader. "Party leaders come and go," he would say. "Never make election promises you can't keep. Promise only your best efforts if re-elected." Good advice for all of us. "Don't get too excited when you receive a call from party headquarters during an election campaign. If you ignore them, they usually go away." And, "Every member should take a weekend off a month to spend with his or her family," more good advice that I haven't always been able to follow.

Today, we are joined in the House by some of the Johnson family, some of his former staff, as well as some of Jack's and Marnie's closest friends. We all miss them both and think of them often. As we gather today to celebrate and give thanks for Jack's outstanding service, we resolve to ensure that the timeless values of integrity, commitment, family and community—all the things he believed in and all things he represented—will be carried on by the service we can render to others in his memory.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills would like a word.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: As Jack was a very, very close friend of mine during my period in the 1980s and the 1970s, I just wanted to say to his family—thank you to his friends. I see Bill Moody, his former campaign manager, up there. Jack and Bill gave me a call at 1 o'clock in the morning after the 1987 election, when there were 16 PC members re-elected, Jack being one and me being one. They were celebrating at that point in time, very much, and wanted me to be part of it.

I can never forget Premier Davis coming into caucus down the hall here when we were in the government in the early 1980s and saying that there were two members of caucus who served their constituents better than any of the other members of the caucus, and they were Jack Johnson and Ron McNeil from Elgin. He based that upon the numbers of correspondence, the letters that these two members had written to him and to ministers, and the degree of interest they had in their constituents.

I must say, too, just because of his character, and because of the way he conducted himself when I was serving as a minister in Mr. Davis's government, when Jack asked you to do something he would always preface it and say, "Norm, if you can't do anything, I fully understand. But can you really try for this? Because this constituent was really in need." I have to say to every-

body in this Legislature that when somebody comes to you and asks you like that and has the character and the integrity that Jack Johnson did, it's very difficult for a minister to say no. He was so successful because of his genuine interest in his constituency. Marnie, his wife, was a tremendous partner, and she was a dear friend of mine as well. I miss them both very much.

Lastly, I'd like to say to all members of the Legislature that I have never seen a more cohesive pair than Jack Johnson and Ted Arnott. I thought it was strange that Jim called Ted "Ted Johnson." The way Ted has cared for Jack in retirement and Jack cared for Ted—it was like father and son in terms of their relationship. Ted, I want to thank you for your care for my good friend and our good friend. I know that all the people up there know of your close association and the help you gave Jack when he retired from this place because he missed it so much. Ted, you did a great job for Jack, and Jack did a great job for you. I know you both loved each other. I will miss him every day that I think about him and I keep talking about him.

Thank you very much to his friends and family. He was a great man for all of us.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you to all members. I will ensure that the family receives a copy of the DVD and today's Hansard.

Motions?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I think it's ministerial statements, isn't it?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No, I've got things in hand. You may not think so, from time to time.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), changes have been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Ramal assumes ballot item number 36 and Mr. Crozier assumes ballot item number 46.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I rise in the House today to speak to new legislation that, if passed, would save lives and protect individuals and families from the harmful effects of the misuse of prescription narcotics and controlled substances. At the same time, our proposed legislation's goal is to restore the balance between ensuring access to appropriate pain treatment for patients who need it while preventing misuse, abuse and addiction.

1550

This legislation responds to one of the recommendations of the all-party Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, so ably chaired by Oakville MPP Kevin Flynn.

I'd like to start today by thanking members of the Narcotics Advisory Panel who are in the gallery today. Your advice has been instrumental in the development of this strategy.

Thank you to Diane McArthur, our ADM and executive officer of the Ontario public drug programs; Anne Resnick from the Ontario College of Pharmacists; Tina Perlman from the Ontario College of Pharmacists; Mario Di Tommaso from the Toronto Police Service's drug squad; and Angela Mailis-Gagnon from Toronto Western Hospital.

I would like to say thank you to Pamela McDonald, my senior policy adviser, who has been so instrumental in this work. I would also like to acknowledge the work of Helen Stevenson, the former executive officer of the Ontario drug program.

I would also like to welcome other leaders who are here today to support this legislation: Dr. Michael Gardner from the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario, Dr. Janet Kasperski from the Ontario College of Family Physicians, Dr. Peter Selby from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Linda Sibley from Addiction Services of Thames Valley, Donna Bain from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, Dennis Darby from the Ontario Pharmacists' Association, Linda Samek from the Ontario Dental Association, Louise Verity from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, and Chief Florence Phillips and Saka Pembleton from the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne. I would also like to welcome Dr. Rick Glazier.

Thank you all for joining us today.

I'm here today to talk about a crisis that is affecting families all over Ontario. It's a crisis we have to act on, and we have to act now.

Let me start by telling you a very real story. Toronto doctor Rick Glazier lost his son last year to an unintentional narcotic overdose. Daniel was only 18 years old. As a mother, I cannot imagine what Dr. Glazier and his family continue to deal with. I've been told that Daniel got caught up in the abuse of narcotics and was able to access endless amounts of these powerful medications on the street. What struck me about Daniel Glazier's story is that his father, Dr. Glazier, is someone who can prescribe narcotics. He's a family physician.

On the one hand, Dr. Glazier can point to how important access to these drugs is for patients in need of pain management. On the other hand, he understands how important it is that patients, prescribers and dispensers better understand the dangers associated with these drugs and that those responsible for the wide availability of these drugs for illicit purposes are identified and dealt with appropriately.

Dr. Glazier is here in the gallery with us today. Dr. Glazier, I want to personally express my deepest con-

dolences for the loss of your son, and I want to thank you for having the courage to come forward with your story. My hope is that, through your voice, we can raise even more awareness about this very serious issue.

What Dr. Glazier has experienced first-hand is happening to families province-wide. The facts are staggering. We know that since 2004 the number of deaths related to the narcotic group oxycodone has nearly doubled. We know that Canada has one of the highest rates of narcotic use in the world and that Ontario has a much higher rate of narcotic use than anywhere else in the country. Narcotics-abuse-related admissions to treatment and addictions services in Ontario have doubled since 2004.

The problem was made very clear to me when I went on a ride-along with Sergeant Lorna Bruce from London Police Service. It was on this ride-along that we met a drug-addicted woman who was working as a sex trade worker to pay for her habit. I was deeply impacted when I learned that only a few short years ago, this woman was a soccer mom. She was driving a minivan and she was building her own local business. Her life changed quickly. After an injury, she was put on prescription narcotics to deal with the pain. One thing led to another, and the soccer mom found herself addicted. She lost everything, including her kids. She turned to prostitution.

This is just one of the many stories I have heard about the damaging effects of narcotics. I've heard pleas from the chiefs of our First Nation communities, telling us that they have declared states of emergency in their communities because of the devastation of this problem. I've heard from pharmacists, terrified after having been robbed at knifepoint. I've heard from the police, who report that there's been an increase in crime related to prescription drug abuse. I know that many of you have also heard these tragic stories. It's a grim picture and it's a very real picture. We need to curb the abuse so that people who need pain relief get it, but in the right doses and for the right length of time.

The abuse of prescription narcotics, painkillers, has emerged as a public health and safety issue in jurisdictions around the world. These drugs are being over-prescribed, they are being overused and, in some cases, being obtained illegally and sold on the street for profit. This situation cannot be allowed to continue. That's why our government is taking strong action to save lives and improve health outcomes for Ontarians by curbing abuse, addiction and diversion of narcotics while ensuring that patients who need pain treatment get it.

I am proposing legislation that, if passed, would allow the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to collect, analyze and disclose personal health information that relates to all prescription narcotics and controlled substances dispensed to anyone in Ontario. Right now, the ministry does not have the authority relating to claims information for recipients outside the Ontario drug benefit program. There is absolutely nothing stopping people now from visiting multiple pharmacies or doctors over and over again to gain access to drugs. This has

resulted in unrestrained and excessive quantities of prescription narcotics and controlled substances being prescribed and dispensed with minimal oversight.

An electronic database would enable the ministry to collect, monitor and analyze information related to prescription narcotics and other controlled substances, it would identify patterns of inappropriate or excessive prescribing or dispensing, and it would implement a province-wide system of alerts when attempts to visit multiple prescribers or visit multiple pharmacies are detected. In instances of inappropriate use, responses would range from educational support and resources, reporting to the appropriate regulatory colleges and, in extreme circumstances, law enforcement. The database would build greater accountability for health care professionals and, most importantly, protect our patients.

We've worked with the Information and Privacy Commissioner and incorporated her advice into this legislation. I very much look forward to any future advice she may provide.

This strategy is about more than just a database. As part of our broader narcotics strategy, we will also raise public awareness about safety, including youth education, and incorporate more narcotic and pain management education into the medical school curriculum. We're also working with a group of experts to develop recommendations for ways we can move forward with better treatments for addictions.

People are dying. Parents like Dr. Glazier are burying their children. Children are losing their parents. As a government, we have to act. We have to act now. This legislation is essential and I ask all members to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Responses?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to respond to the minister's statement with respect to the Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act on behalf of the PC caucus.

Let me say at the outset that the issue of prescription drug abuse in Ontario is urgent and growing rapidly. There's no question that it needs to be addressed, so I do commend the minister on taking action to bring forward potential solutions. I haven't had the opportunity to review the bill in detail as yet, but I do understand that there has been extensive consultation with experts on the Narcotics Advisory Panel, so I do thank you for your assistance in preparing this legislation, for your advice and for your considerable attention to this matter. It is greatly appreciated.

1600

As the minister indicated, not only does Canada rank among the top countries in the world regarding the use of prescription narcotics, statistics show that Ontario has the worst rate of prescription drug addiction in the country. This epidemic has spread to the streets and to our children.

One 2006 study found indications that non-medical use of prescription opioids is increasingly replacing heroin use. Experts say that those who are able to obtain prescriptions often will provide them to traffickers or sell

them themselves for their own profit. One tablet of OxyContin can cost a patient between \$1 and \$4. In return, this can be resold on the market for \$45 or \$50, and we certainly heard in the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions that in some of the First Nations communities, particularly in the north, one tablet can sell for several hundred dollars. So you can only begin to understand the extent of the problem.

In 2009 the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health reported that 18% of students from grades seven to 12 had used prescription opioids for non-medical reasons in the past year. This made prescription opioids the third-most abused drug by high school students, behind cannabis and alcohol. So there's no question that we need to take action now. As the minister reported, this issue was noted by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, which recently released its report under the able chairmanship of the member from Oakville. I was also privileged to serve as a member.

One of our recommendations was for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately address the problem of addiction to prescription painkillers. This is very immediate, and I am grateful for that.

But we also certainly urge the minister to not only adopt but to implement the other 22 recommendations of the final report of the mental health and addictions committee, one of which is the lack of addiction recovery services in Ontario. I do understand that there is an addiction treatment component to this legislation but I would urge the minister to consider adopting the report of the select committee. This would address the concern regarding a lack of addiction treatment programs in the province, while also supporting a more comprehensive mental health system. As we know, there is a direct correlation in many instances between people suffering from significant mental health problems who are also addicted to, among other things, prescription painkillers.

Having said all of this, I do have one big concern, and that is not with respect to the legislation itself but rather the implementation of the legislation, including the construction of a database which will track the doctors, pharmacists and patients who are involved in the consumption of these medications. It does disturb me—as it does, indeed, the rest of the PC caucus—that we need to invest another \$1 million in this strategy, not because the people who are addicted to these medications don't deserve this or because we shouldn't identify the source of the problem. Rather, it's the fact that because of the incredible bungling of the eHealth fiasco, we have to spend another million dollars—and I suspect it will be a lot more than that—in order to provide this band-aid solution before we can get a comprehensive ehealth system up and running. So it is particularly concerning to me, given the urgency of the problem. My question to the minister would be, how long is it going to take to get this up and running? We really need this to happen now, and frankly, this government doesn't have a really good track record in this respect.

I do hope that it can be quickly implemented.

I do also have a concern quickly that I would like to just mention: the fact that there is also a need to balance this policy with a chronic pain strategy. I hope that that's something that the minister will consider as part of the overall strategy with respect to this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Mr. Howard Hampton: This proposed legislation is long overdue. Addiction to things like OxyContin and Percocet is a problem that has been growing at a serious rate for some time in the province. So it is, as I say, long overdue that there be some response from the government.

The response that is part of this legislation is, as I read it, for the most part focused on monitoring and education, and those are good things. You have to monitor the degree to which these kinds of drugs are being prescribed and over-prescribed or improperly prescribed, and you have to work with pharmacists, physicians, mental health agencies and patients in the area of education. Those things are good and fine, but there are two other aspects to this issue which need to be addressed as well.

I am told that in my part of the province, someone who finally recognizes that they are addicted to Percocet or OxyContin will wait more than six months just to have a chance at accessing treatment. Note what I said: They will wait more than six months just to have a chance at treatment. At the end of six months, they may be told, "Sorry, the treatment facility is filled. There's nothing we can do for you." But just to have a chance at treatment, they will wait more than six months.

Chiefs of First Nations in my constituency tell me that what happens then works something like this: That period when someone realizes they've got an addiction and they need to do something with it and they're told, "Well, come back and see us in six months," often results in an even more serious addiction. When people are told, "You can't get help. Sorry, there's no help now. You have to come back and see us in six months and we might be able to help you," people then go right back into the addiction. You have to be able to address people's needs when they recognize their need, and if you cannot address the need then, the problem becomes even more serious.

The legislation is very skimpy, and the government's public relations production here is very skimpy on treatment. Treatment has to happen, otherwise we have a crisis on our hands that we have not even begun to understand.

Let me give you an example from some of the First Nation communities in my constituency. The addiction rate in some of those constituencies is 30% or 40% of the people or higher—30% or 40%. So in a community with a population of 1,000, 300 or 400 people in the community are addicted to Percocet and OxyContin. The kind of scenario that we heard of women selling themselves on the street to pay for their addiction happens all too often.

This brings me to another part of this: There has to be a legal response. Chiefs of First Nations have been

asking this government for emergency powers to set up the kind of search and seizure at just two airports, the Sioux Lookout Airport and the Red Lake Airport, to interdict the supply of drugs coming in. Let me say this: If this were Toronto and we had 400,000 people addicted to OxyContin and Percocet, I think governments would take an emergency response. We would see serious search and seizure at the airport.

But that's not happening amongst many of these First Nations. The airport is the key because many of these communities have no road: 25 of these communities you have to fly into. It seems to me that there needs to be a response from the government on this, because many of the drugs we're talking about are not, in fact, coming from Ontario pharmacists, they're coming from the United States, they're coming from Winnipeg, they're coming from outside the borders of Ontario. So even if you get tough with pharmacists and you do the education and the monitoring, you're not going to interdict the supply of drugs. There must be a legal response from this government as well.

Yes, the Charter of Rights protects people's rights, but when you're dealing with an emergency situation and hundreds of people are dying, it seems to me that calls for a legal response to that emergency crisis.

1610

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm glad to present this petition: Stop the Unfair Tax Grab.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:"

"Whereas Ontario has lost 171,000 jobs since October and over 300,000 manufacturing and resource sector jobs since 2004; and

"Whereas many families are facing the threat of layoffs or reduced hours; and

"Whereas, rather than introducing a plan to sustain jobs and put Ontario's economy back on track, Dalton McGuinty and his government chose to slap an 8% tax on everyday purchases while giving profitable corporations a \$2-billion income tax cut;

"Be it resolved that the undersigned call on the Legislature to cancel the scheduled implementation of sales tax harmonization."

I agree with this petition and will affix my name to it. Nick will bring it down.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm tabling about 8,000 signatures on a petition, along with my colleague MPP Charles Sousa, on behalf of Nortel pensioners. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Pension Benefits Act (PBA) regulations for 'loss of sponsor' of defined benefit pension plans only permit windup and annuity purchase; and

"Whereas in the present economic climate the cost of annuities is at a 25-year high with no relief in sight;

"Therefore the purchase of annuities exacerbates the punitive impact of windup on Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, and increases the costs passed on to the taxpayers of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To amend the PBA regulations to permit the Administrator and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) to apply other options in the 'loss of sponsor' scenario which will provide more benefits to Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, such as the continuation of the pension plan under responsible financial management by a non-government institution."

I affix my signature and send it to the table via page Shanthos.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

"Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

"Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 70;

"Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment in 2007 to provide a 2% base funding increase to agencies providing developmental services every year up to 2010-11;

"Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

"Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to service providers in the developmental services sector."

As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature and give it to page Henry.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have a petition signed by 203 members of the Bearskin Lake First Nation. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we oppose Bill 191, the Far North Act, and call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to withdraw it;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Bill 191 violates the treaties and disrespects our jurisdiction. It imposes a massive interconnected, protected area over our homelands without any compensation. It splits our northern First Nations from our southern First Nations.

"Ontario has an obligation to honour and respect our treaties and our inherent jurisdiction. All development and protection decisions within NAN territory require the free, prior and informed consent of NAN First Nations.

"We call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately withdraw Bill 191 and, instead, initiate a respectable government-to-government dialogue with NAN First Nations."

As I said, this has been signed by 203 members of the Bearskin Lake First Nation, and I affix my signature as well.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have with me a petition that was presented to myself and MPP Yasir Naqvi from Ottawa Centre. It's part of 8,000 signatures provided by Nortel Retirees and former employees Protection Canada. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Pension Benefits Act (PBA) regulations for 'loss of sponsor' of defined benefit pension plans only permit windup and annuity purchase; and

"Whereas in the present economic climate the cost of annuities is at a 25-year high with no relief in sight;

"Therefore the purchase of annuities exacerbates the punitive impact of windup on Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, and increases the costs passed on to the taxpayers of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To amend the PBA regulations to permit the Administrator and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) to apply other options in the 'loss of sponsor' scenario which will provide more benefits to Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, such as the continuation of the pension plan under responsible financial management by a non-government institution."

I affix my signature and provide it to Caelan, the page, to deliver it to the table.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Parliament of Ontario, presented to me by Joanne and Dohn Pelton from RR 1, Innerkip.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring these powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I affix my signature, as I agree with this petition.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have a petition signed by 197 members of Wapekeka First Nation, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario proposes to pass Bill 191, the Far North Act, it violates the treaties and disrespects our jurisdiction. It is not a true partnership." It imposes a massive disconnect of economic, social, cultural and traditional ties to our homelands by designated protected areas "over Nishnawbe-Aski ... homelands without any compensation. If Bill 191 passes, we will not recognize it;

"Whereas we, the people of Wapekeka First Nation within Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, have not yet been consulted and accommodated;

"Whereas we, the people of Wapekeka First Nation within Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, have not given free, prior and informed consent to Bill 191, all development and protection decisions within Wapekeka First Nation of Nishnawbe-Aski Nation require the free, prior and informed consent of the people;

"Whereas we, the people of Wapekeka First Nation within Nishnawbe-Aski Nation will make the final land use decisions, Ontario has an obligation to honour and respect Treaty number 9 and Treaty number 5 and First Nations' inherent jurisdiction. We will continue to work on local, community-driven land planning initiatives based on our jurisdiction; and

"Whereas we call on all interested parties, including environmental organizations and industry, to withdraw their support for Bill 191;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To oppose third reading of Bill 191, the Far North Act, and call on Ontario to withdraw it;

"To engage in honourable consultation with the First Nations whose homelands and treaty and aboriginal rights are impacted by Bill 191; and

"To obtain the free, prior and informed consent of the First Nations whose homelands and treaty and aboriginal rights are impacted by Bill 191."

As I said, this has been signed by 197 members of Wapekeka First Nation, and I affix my signature as well.

1620

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition signed by thousands of good citizens of Cambridge, which reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other hospitals in the Waterloo region are experiencing substantial increased demands due to population growth; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's freeze on new long-term-care facilities has resulted in additional long-term-care patients in our hospitals; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's cuts to hospital funding have resulted in a dangerous environment for patients and staff in Cambridge and across Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the McGuinty government meet its obligations to introduce a population-needs-based funding formula for hospitals, as has been done in other Canadian provinces."

I agree with this petition and affix my name thereto.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have a petition from 45 members of Kasabonika Lake First Nation. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario proposes to pass Bill 191, the Far North Act, it violates the treaties and disrespects our jurisdiction. It is not a true partnership. It imposes a massive, interconnected protected area over Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (NAN) homelands without any compensation. If Bill 191 passes, we will not recognize it;

"Whereas we, the people of Kasabonika Lake First Nation within Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, have not yet been consulted and accommodated;

"Whereas we, the people of Kasabonika Lake First Nation within Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, have not given free prior and informed consent to Bill 191, all development and protection decisions within NAN territory require the free, prior and informed consent of the people;

"Whereas we, the people of Kasabonika Lake First Nation within Nishnawbe-Aski Nation will make the final land use decisions, Ontario has an obligation to honour and respect Treaty number 9 and Treaty number 5 and First Nations' inherent jurisdiction. We will continue to work on local, community-driven land planning initiatives based on our jurisdiction; and

"Whereas we call on all interested parties, including environmental organizations and industry, to withdraw their support for Bill 191;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To oppose third reading of Bill 191, the Far North Act, and call on Ontario to withdraw it;

"To engage in honourable consultation with the First Nations whose homelands and treaty and aboriginal rights are impacted by Bill 191; and

"To obtain the free, prior and informed consent of the First Nations whose homelands and treaty and aboriginal rights are impacted by Bill 191."

As I said, this has been signed by 45 members of Kasabonika Lake First Nation, and I have affixed my signature to it as well.

RECYCLING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to read this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which has been supplied to me by some students of Lisgar Middle School. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the grade 7H students of Lisgar Middle School believe that the current method of recycling used dry cell batteries and other household hazardous waste materials is not successful. We have attempted to create the easiest and most comprehensive method of recycling batteries and other household hazardous materials.... This initiative fits ... into the same frame of reference as the

blue box recycling and composting programs, which have encouraged individuals and households to recycle as much as they already do. We implore the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to give this proposed initiative of a household red box recycling program your approval...;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: ... to support, enthusiastically, the Recycling Raptors of grade 7H at Lisgar Middle School, in their proposal of a household the red box recycling program, and ... to pass into law such a program, as described ... outlining the red box recycling initiative...."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition on behalf of the students at Lisgar Middle School, and I especially thank Fatima Khaled of Terragar Boulevard and Sandy Beckett of Prairie Circle for signing it. I'll send it down with page Alex.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time for petitions has expired, and I am certain we are now at orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPEN FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO PROPICE AUX AFFAIRES

Mr. Fonseca, on behalf of Ms. Pupatello, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 68, An Act to promote Ontario as open for business by amending or repealing certain Acts / *Projet de loi 68, Loi favorisant un Ontario propice aux affaires en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Debate?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Today I rise to talk about our Open for Business legislation, in particular how it contributes to fairness and safety in Ontario workplaces.

I'm honoured to stand here today and support the bill introduced by my colleague the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade has led our government's initiative to reach out to businesses and improve communication and co-operation between business and government. Although the Minister of Economic Development and Trade has taken the lead role in this effort, the development of the Open for Business Act has involved numerous ministries. I applaud the efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Consumer Services, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Government Services, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry, and the Ministry of Transportation. I am also proud to say that my ministry, the Ministry of Labour, has had a major role in the Open for Business legislation.

The fact that 10 ministries are involved in this legislation shows just how committed our government is

to supporting business. Positive interaction with business is not just a responsibility of one ministry; it involves many. I would say perhaps it involves all ministries in government.

We know that a thriving business community contributes to a prosperous Ontario and good jobs for Ontarians. A thriving business community develops innovative products and solutions that address some of our most pressing issues of the day. A thriving business community contributes to the revenue that allows our government to provide Ontarians with high-quality education and health care. As the economy continues to show signs of recovering, we are continuing our work to make Ontario a great place to invest and to start a business and to expand that business. We're creating an environment that supports new and established businesses while maintaining our high standards to protect the public interest.

As my colleague the member from Mississauga South will speak to shortly on the legislation, the Open for Business Act, if passed, will address long-standing concerns of the business community. It would save businesses both time and money while continuing to provide appropriate government oversight.

1630

The Open for Business initiative aims to create faster, smarter, and more stream-lined services and regulations, and the benefits of these smart services often extend well beyond our business community. Members of the public also want governments to provide faster and more effective services, and I'm proud to say that we have dealt with concerns of both business and workers in schedule 9 of the Open for Business Act, which amends the Employment Standards Act. This proposed legislation, if passed, would make the resolution of employment standards claims both faster and easier for employees and employers.

In recent years, we've received more than 20,000 claims a year. This has meant that some of those claims have taken long to resolve. Employees have waited too long to get money into their hands. Employers have also had to deal with outstanding issues for too long.

Bill 68 would, if passed, result in faster resolution of those employment standards claims. This means getting that money back into the pockets of hard-working Ontarians faster. We're helping employers get claims off their books sooner. The bill would encourage employees to contact their employer as the first step to filing an employment standards claim. Employees would have to contact their employers, but they wouldn't have to meet their employers face to face. They could write, email or call, and we'll give them the tools to do just that. We're developing a guide and template letter and an online video that walks you through the process step by step to filling out a claim. But if employees feel threatened or face barriers, they can bypass this notification and make a claim directly to the Ministry of Labour.

Experience tells us that many employers want to do the right thing. When employers are notified of a complaint, we find that they want to rectify that situation

as quickly as possible. We know that that isn't possible or appropriate in some cases, and we have taken that into account.

The proposed amendments would allow our officers to take a more active role in helping parties solve their problems. Officers could encourage settlement through discussions, but officers would only get involved if both the employer and the employee agree to that. Settlement discussions would be completely voluntary. The reality is that currently employers and employees can settle claims at any time, and sometimes a settlement is reached sooner if an independent third party can get involved. Sometimes a settlement works better for both sides if an independent third party contributes new ideas and fresh perspectives to dealing with that claim.

The involvement of an officer is another option at the disposal of both parties, and this legislation would also give employment standards officers the power to deal with undue delay in resolving claims. Currently, decisions on claims can be excessively delayed if one side won't provide all the relevant information that is necessary. This proposed legislation, if passed, would allow officers to make decisions based on all the available evidence that they have, that information that has been provided to them within a reasonable time. Officers would also have the flexibility to accommodate parties who may not be providing information for good reason. These proposed reforms build on the work that we've already done to make the claims process as fast and effective as possible.

We've already made great strides in dealing with the large number of claims that we receive. The Ministry of Labour received over 23,000 claims last year; that is a dramatic increase of 40% since 2003. Last year we closed over 21,000 of those claims, of which an increase of 30% came from the previous year. We've improved our claims management system to promote early resolution. We've increased our staff at the provincial claims centre in Sault Ste. Marie. We're bringing the parties together in decision-making meetings to resolve those claims more expeditiously, and we conduct early reviews of all claims. Now almost one third of claims are resolved at the initial investigation stage within an average of 30 days. That's progress.

To strengthen enforcement and improve our claims resolution process, our government has made some great investments: \$6 million over two years in the recent budget. This is an investment in addition to the \$4.5 million we invested in the 2009 budget. And we've done as much as possible within the existing system. Our proposed legislation will now give our employment standards officers the tools that they need to achieve optimum results for both employees and employers.

Our work on the claims process is only one of the measures that my ministry has undertaken to promote fair, safe and healthy workplaces in Ontario. At the Ministry of Labour we've introduced a number of interactive tools that will help both employers and employees. Last year we launched a holiday pay calculator

that helps calculate the amount of holiday pay that somebody is owed. This has gone over with great acclaim. This interactive tool has taken a complex requirement and made it easy for employers to comply and employees to understand what they are owed.

We also recently launched tools for the calculation of termination and severance pay through our website. These tools will make it easier to figure out if an employee is eligible for termination pay or severance pay and to calculate the amounts that are due. We have heard especially from small and medium-sized businesses how important these tools are to them. The owners of these businesses wear many different hats, and if we can help them in any way to allow them to be more efficient and effective and run their businesses in a more productive way, we will.

These tools have received rave reviews from many stakeholders. I know that the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario, from all their members, have heard only positive anecdotal evidence and emails and letters and other information that they've received about how these tools are helping their members.

These online calculators are only one of several tools that we've developed to help employees and employers understand their rights and their obligations.

Open for Business is about helping create an environment that respects employers and employees and recognizes their enormous contributions to our province. I am proud to be part of a government that is working to ensure fairness in the workplace. It's an inherent right of all Ontarians. It's what makes our economy strong and our labour force innovative, productive and competitive. It's what makes our great province stand out above the pack in a changing global economy.

So I stand before this Legislature to ask for all your support, so that all members support this legislation that is going to help the prosperity of our province, help our economy, and in turn allow us to provide those public services that all Ontarians hold so near and dear: great education and health care here in the province of Ontario.

Thank you so much for the opportunity, as we speak here that Ontario is an open-for-business jurisdiction. We want businesses to come and locate here. As a government, we will work with them to grow their business, and that's a good thing for everyone.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to speak on behalf of the official opposition with a few remarks about Bill 68.

The minister in his remarks referred to the fact that one of the objectives of this was to streamline services for people in the province, particularly those people involved in business: with business between each other, business between themselves and government. It certainly raises, in my mind, a very, very important aspect of the question of regulation and the role that it plays in the relationship between government and the many sectors. Obviously I think that there's no one who would quarrel with the importance of providing an appropriate

regulatory framework, and by that I'm thinking in terms of health and safety, people's ability to do business and the products that consumers buy. So regulation obviously is a very important role of government.

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It also, besides creating this safety and certainly confidence in consumers, most importantly creates a level playing field for business. Business understands the fact that if everyone they compete with has the same kind of restrictions and regulation and cost, then they can feel confident that their ability to do well in that kind of environment is based on their efficiency, on their customer service, on their ingenuity and things like that. It's not hampered by a regulatory burden.

Unfortunately, there's much in what government provides that people regard as red tape. Red tape means overlap, it means duplication, it means cost and, sometimes to those people who are trying to keep up with an ever-expanding regulatory field, some of these, in fact, are frivolous. There's a tipping point. There's a point where regulations create a level playing field and provide consumer confidence, and then there's the point at which people begin to lose confidence and they see this as costly and repetitive, as well as potentially frivolous. When that tipping point comes, there's an element that eats away at consumer confidence. People aren't sure, when they're doing business with someone, whether they are adhering to the most important parts of the regulatory regime. One of the problems when that begins to happen is that people, feeling the burden of what is now red tape, begin to look for ways they might cut corners. The effect of this, and the most important thing to recall, is the fact that now the only part of the economy that grows is the underground economy.

I think it's important to understand, when the government talks about being open for business, that we need to understand that framework of the difference between regulation and red tape, because in many instances of conversations I have with people trying to do business in this province it would seem that regulation has been overtaken by red tape.

It's very interesting to look at the ideas that are presented to us by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business in their document *Prosperity Restricted by Red Tape*. There they are able, through their own research, to tell us that the annual cost of red tape in Canada is an estimated \$30.5 billion. So when the government talks about being open for business, we need to keep in mind some of the problems that come from what appear to be the issues of red tape.

In their January 2010 paper, the Canadian Federation of Business identified the burden of government regulation as a priority for business of 65%, second only to the total tax burden at 75%. What this means is that when they canvassed their membership, the total tax burden issue obviously was the number one issue, with 75% of the respondents identifying it as their first issue, but the regulation of business was a close second at 65%. Certainly, the burden of this was made obvious by presenters at the committee hearings on this bill.

We also heard some of the effects of the government's lack of consultation on the bill. Just as an example, while the minister refers to how important this bill is and the number of ministries that contributed to this omnibus bill, we only had one day of hearings. I think it sort of flies in the face of demonstrating that it's an extremely important bill to the government and to its business relations when we only have one day of hearings and then we also face time allocation. It may have been an important bill for the government, but it certainly wasn't one they were prepared to spend much time on.

It's unfortunate because of the fact that we're looking at many, many stories of people who have experienced red tape. One of the problems about it is that for a small business this is not billable time. So you're looking at virtually making a donation to government by the fact that your time is taken filling out forms and providing information that is required.

As I mentioned, the CFIB did come to the committee, and I think it's important to put on the record some of the comments they made. They indicated: "While this is a step in the right direction, there are obviously a number of pieces that are still missing as part of the government's overall plan to address regulations. As we've discussed before with this committee, there are a number of models that are currently in play in and across Canada where governments have taken steps to address the regulatory burden."

They continue, "If you look at British Columbia, they have a model in place where they counted up all the regulations they had on the books and then they reported on that number on a quarterly basis, just to indicate how big the problem was and in which direction it was headed. Across to the other side of the country, in Nova Scotia, you have a different system at play. What they've done is they've counted up all the number of hours that it takes a business owner to comply with government regulations and they have then set benchmarks to reduce the number of hours that they have to spend filling out government paperwork. That model has actually succeeded, even with the recent change of government in Nova Scotia.

"That's, I think, the first thing that we need to do."

We have more sage advice from Ontario's business leaders that this government is not particularly interested in.

A written submission from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce strongly criticizes Ontario's red tape mess: "The existing regulatory framework is an impediment to sustained economic growth. As the economy has diversified and society has become more complex, the government's responsibilities have increased accordingly.

"Despite periodic cutbacks and downloading, the three orders of government in Canada have undergone a continuous expansion over the past several decades, leading to an accumulation of bureaucracy and intersecting mandates.

"In Ontario, this process has had a negative impact on economic prosperity. Due to an insular focus and lack of

coordination between the various levels and branches of government, Ontario businesses are forced to contend with a regulatory framework which is overly prescriptive, unduly heavy and exceedingly difficult to navigate, all of which impact business' bottom line."

The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters identified a concern with the bill:

"While CME is generally supportive, we have a concern with one aspect in particular that does not reflect the Open for Business moniker. The Open for Business Act makes changes to the application of administrative penalties under the Environmental Enforcement Statute Law Amendment Act that are of concern to many manufacturers.

"The proposed wording of Bill 68 would enable penalties to be applied by either a provincial officer or a director. It should only be a director level as defined in the Ministry of the Environment organizational hierarchy.

"This is at a more restrictive, more senior level to ensure a broader oversight. It is also critical that businesses have the ability to appeal to ensure that the principles of natural justice are recognized and upheld."

1650

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has indicated their support for removing compensation in legislation for livestock, poultry and honeybees killed by predators, providing the replacement regulations cover what is needed. They want any regulation to include the following principles: "that the list of predators be expanded beyond current wolves, coyotes and bears; that the list of eligible livestock and poultry be expanded beyond cattle, horses, sheep, goats, swine and poultry; that livestock guard animals—donkeys, dogs and llamas—be treated as livestock; that compensation reflect true market values; that the provincial government reimburse municipalities for their costs in running this program; that the appeal process from the Livestock, Poultry and Honey Bee Protection Act be retained; and that the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs's policy on setting a value for newborn lambs, calves and kids be retained."

These are just a few examples that demonstrate the range of regulatory change that is contemplated in this bill.

One of the other areas is the question of warrantless-search provisions. Again, concerns were raised by the federation, and the question of natural hazards as well as biosecurity on farms were some of the issues that they had raised. So this is a recurring issue throughout the presentations.

Ontario Forest Industries was also critical of the effect that the Endangered Species Act is having on their industry. They said:

"Bill 68 raises more concern than comfort, and while the provisions for expedited approvals are positive, they are far outweighed by the concerns surrounding the proposed changes to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act under schedule 10.

"Quite clearly, the proposed forestry changes in Bill 68 do nothing more than simplify the government's

process for handing out unwarranted and unnecessary permits under the Endangered Species Act.

"Regardless of how Bill 68 simplifies the process, the problem remains—permits under the Endangered Species Act do not work.

"The ESA is a broken piece of legislation, and one of its fundamental flaws is the permitting process."

When we look at just those few examples, it becomes very clear that there is much concern in the community at large about Bill 68. Certainly I'm happy that the government has acknowledged the issue of red tape, I would say for the first time in seven years. But they have not really come to grips with the kinds of day-to-day issues that, frankly, as others have pointed out, are significant deterrents to the kind of economic activity that everyone would agree would be helpful in this province.

I think the fact that small business finds itself without a minister with that specific cabinet post again sends the wrong message of this government and its willingness to take an interest in small business. Many people are discouraged when they look at the kind of regulatory burden; they are actually discouraged from starting a business themselves. I think this is something the government has glossed over in this bill.

In the little time that I have left I would just add one thing: This opposition party, this side of the House, we recognize how important it is. One of the very few promises that has been made by our leader is, in fact, recognizing the importance of red tape and a systematic approach to its reduction.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The government calls this the Open for Business Act. I think workers in the province of Ontario would call it the sacrifice-of-workers act. What the government proposes to do here is to take workers who work in some of the most precarious workplaces, workers who are the most vulnerable, workers who cannot find protection anywhere else, workers who do not have the benefit of a union or an association or a federation to fight for them, workers who essentially are on their own—this government proposes to make it more difficult, tougher for those workers to receive the vacation pay, the overtime pay, the regular pay that they're entitled to. Now, I guess this is what McGuinty Liberals refer to as "open for business," but I think of all those workers who work for close to minimum wage, who work under the most precarious of circumstances—in some cases they're working in one job in the morning, another job in the evening and yet another job on the weekend trying to make ends meet. It's their rights that are being sacrificed by this bill, and I want to outline exactly what this bill does.

Schedule 9 of this bill proposes a number of steps that workers must take before being allowed to present a complaint for employment standards violation to the Ministry of Labour. Get this: Workers who, as I said, may be trying to make end meet working in three different jobs, workers who can be dismissed with the snap of

a finger, are now going to be told by this government that before they can bring a complaint to the Ministry of Labour, the workers must inform their employer about employment standards violations and the amount of wages or other entitlements that the employer owes the worker. Only if the employer does not comply with the worker's request, may a worker then file a complaint. Well, get this: You have a worker who has no authority, no power in the workplace, who has to pay the bills; you have an employer who has all the power and authority in the workplace and who knows it; and this government says that from now on the worker who has no authority, no protection, no power in the workplace has to go confront the employer who may be treating them unfairly before that worker can seek the protection of the law.

1700

Let me put it in another context: Somebody is walking down the street and a more powerful, stronger person reaches out and knocks them down. The Liberal government now says, if you change the context a bit, that that person must get up and confront this person who is bigger and stronger than them and ask them—maybe the person is hurt; they must confront this person before they can seek the protection of the law. That is how absurd and unequal this is.

Where did this originate? It originated in the la-la land of the Premier of British Columbia, and I invite people to look at what has happened in British Columbia since this legislation was introduced in that province.

But it goes on—the other steps that workers have to go through before they can seek the protection of the law. For the complaint to be accepted, the worker will be required to indicate in the claim form what information was given to the employer, how it was given, and the response, if any, from the employer. There may be some exceptions for this requirement. There may be some exceptions.

Workers will be required to provide in writing specified information and evidence for their complaint before the claim will be accepted for investigation. Complaints for unpaid wages and employment standards rights will not proceed unless these steps are taken. Once again, there may be some exceptions. “May” is the operative word here. But these are all barriers to workers who are already in a precarious situation, workers who have less power in the workplace than the employer.

As I said, this is already in place in British Columbia. British Columbia introduced this mandatory worker—they call it “mandatory worker self-help,” requiring workers to seek employer compliance prior to being allowed to file an employment standards claim. After introduction of this requirement in 2002, the number of employment standards claims being registered with the Ministry of Labour dropped from over 12,000 a year to between 3,400 and 6,500; an immediate drop of 46%. In 2009, the total of employment standards claims was still 42% lower than they were in 2002, even though the labour force was 15% larger.

Legal clinics and worker advocates in the province of British Columbia who have studied this are very clear. They say it's not that the number of employment standards violations have dropped. It's not that suddenly bad employers have found virtue and found religion. That's not what's happened. What's happened is this: The decline in the number of employment standards complaints filed, they conclude, is largely due to the barriers created by the government. The barriers created by the government have made it much more difficult for workers to file a complaint, and as a result, workers who are being treated unfairly by employers throw up their hands and say, “What's the use?” Tell me what justice is there in that? Is this the Liberal definition of “open for business”? Put the screws to the workers who are in the most precarious position, the workers who have the least protection, and say, “This is good for business in Ontario”?

Those who have looked at this in British Columbia have said, “Look; here's the reality. A requirement to seek compliance for employers effectively requires workers to have access to legal information, accounting information and legal processes that most of us don't have and certainly workers working in the most precarious environments certainly don't have: knowledge about how to apply abstract legal rights to their specific conditions, the ability to gather evidence to prove their case, and the opportunity and facilities to assemble, package and deliver it to former employers.”

Most significantly, this mandatory self-enforcement requires that workers will have the skill set and confidence to confront their employer or former employer about violations. I don't know about Liberal members, but just about every summer I have students come into my constituency offices who have worked for an employer—they may be university students; they may be 17, 18, 19—who say, “Look, I think I'm owed pay. I think I'm owed this, but I don't know anything. What do I do?” Our office has to help them navigate this stuff.

In our part of Ontario there's no employment standards officer at hand; it all has to be done either over the Internet or by telephone. This government assumes everyone has access to the Internet. This government assumes everyone has access to an office that's going to help them. I've got news for you: They don't.

If you look at what this government is doing on the community legal aid front, community legal aid clinics across this province are being either shut down or curtailed. Trying to get a legal aid certificate to get some basic information is becoming more and more and more difficult in community after community in this province. How is somebody supposed to “self-help” themselves if none of these resources are at hand? And that's what they found in British Columbia.

The reality is—and anybody who has worked in employment standards will tell you this—most claims are filed after the employment relationship has broken down. The employer often treats employees very poorly in the process of termination. It's not a matter of saying,

"Who's at fault here?" Once the employment relationship has broken down in a setting where workers do not have a union, very often they're very quickly out the door: "Thank you very much. Goodbye. You're gone." That's the reality.

Just imagine that you're one of those university students or a high school student. You've just been told, "You're out the door; goodbye. Don't come back to work tomorrow." How are you supposed to gather the information? Without knowing anything about the rules of evidence, how are you supposed to gather the relevant evidence? How are you supposed to calculate all of the things that you were owed? You don't have access necessarily to the time sheets. In most places where I worked as a university student, I had my version of the time sheets. The employer often had their version of the time sheets. Let me tell you, it was the employer's version of the time sheets that mattered—if they kept a time sheet.

What this government proposes to do is to penalize those workers who are the most vulnerable and in the most precarious situations in Ontario's workplaces. That's what this government is doing. As I say, the proof of it is in the fact that this legislation has already been adopted in British Columbia. It was adopted in 2002 and the statistical results are there for anybody to see.

The reality is that job loss and income loss are recognized as some of the most significant life changes causing stress for workers and their families. You're trying to pay the hydro bill. You're trying to pay the heating bill. You're trying to pay the rent. You're trying to put food on the table for your kids. Your employer suddenly says to you, "I don't need you anymore. You're gone." In that kind of stressful situation, the McGuinty Liberals propose that that worker has to go about and do all of these so-called self-help measures before they can even ask for the protection of the law. It's undeniably unfair and unjust.

1710

It fails to recognize the substantial structural power imbalances in the workplace between employers and employees where you don't have a union. For most workers, that imbalance, the fact that you could be fired tomorrow, creates reasonable apprehension and fear. How is someone supposed to challenge an employer when they're already in that situation of reasonable apprehension and fear? In our view, a mandatory requirement for workers to contact their employer about wages contravenes the whole purpose of the Employment Standards Act: to provide employees, to provide workers, with an administrative process that helps protect their rights.

In my experience—and before I came to this place I did a fair amount of labour law—workers often attempt to obtain their employment standards rights directly from their employer before they file an employment standards claim. In fact, in most cases that's why the workers are fired. They go to the employer and they say, "Look, I think I'm owed overtime. I think I'm owed vacation pay.

I don't think you kept an accurate time sheet here," and that's when they get fired. This government now says to them, "You have to go back and do it again." After you've been put out the door, after you've been intimidated, after you've been told you no longer have a pay-cheque, this Liberal government says that those workers have to go back again and confront the person who has just fired them.

It seems to me that what's going to happen here is this: You are going to see workers who have been denied their vacation pay, workers who have been denied their regular pay, workers who have been denied their overtime pay, rather than go through the hoops and the hurdles that are going to be created by this government, simply throw up their hands and say, "What's the use?" That's exactly what happened in British Columbia; exactly what the studies in British Columbia have shown. And the government will claim victory. The government will say, "Oh, look, we must be doing a wonderful job. The number of complaints that have come to the employment standards branch is way down." Sure, if you put enough barriers, if you put enough doors in place, if you put enough hoops that people have to jump through, yeah, the number of employment standards claims will drop. What a surprise. If you applied the same principle to our health care system, you could dramatically reduce the number of people who go to the doctor's office. You could dramatically reduce it. You just put enough barriers, enough hoops in place, and people will say, "I can't do it. I can't get there from here."

But that's not justice. It certainly isn't fairness, and it's certainly going to create even more inequality in this province than we already have—and we already have far, far too much. There are too many people at the low end of the income scale, too many people who are having a hard time paying the bills, and you're going to see more of it as a result of legislation like this.

What was equally wrong about this legislation is the way that it's been steamrolled through this Legislature. One would think that with something like this, which intends to fundamentally change the balance of rights as between workers and employers, there would have been some consultation, there would have been actual public hearings. Were there public hearings in Thunder Bay? No. Public hearings in Windsor? No. Public hearings in Kingston? No. In Ottawa? No. In Sudbury? No. In Sault Ste. Marie, in Sarnia, in London?

Hon. James J. Bradley: It was like the social contract: no public hearings.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Oh, I see Liberals promoting Bob Rae again. Good for you, Jim. Good for you. I like to hear that. I like to hear that, Jim.

Interjections.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The reality is, Speaker—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The reality is that this legislation was limited to one day of hearings, and the gov-

ernment was not prepared to accept any amendments. That's the kind of steamroller that we have here.

Here's the context, though, that stands in the background of some of this. The reality is that only 28% of Ontario workers are unionized, leaving most of the workers in this province in a situation where they will now have to enforce their own minimum employment rights. And as I said, it is workers in the lowest-paid jobs, the most precarious jobs, who are least able to negotiate fair wages and working conditions, who are most in need of accessible, effective and enforced employment standards. They're the people who are most vulnerable. They're the people who get hurt the most.

Some other realities of context: Studies have shown that unpaid wages over time and other violations are not just from a few bad-apple employers. Studies that have been done confirm that we have substantial formal employment standards violations.

In the late 1990s, a federal government labour standards evaluation surveyed employers and found that 25% of employers were in widespread violation of the Canada Labour Code and 50% were in partial violation. These findings were confirmed a decade later by both Statistics Canada and the Workers' Action Centre.

The fact of the matter is that even now, the Employment Standards Act and the employment standards branch are not adequately staffed with resources. While the number of workers covered by the Employment Standards Act has increased by 24% between 1997 and 2007, the funding for the employment standards program has been reduced by 33%.

Even recent minimal increases to the employment standards program in the 2009-10 budget leave the program over 10% below 1997 funding levels. Less than 1% of workplaces are inspected for employment standards violations, so there's little risk of violations being detected. An employer's only real risk of being found in violation of the Employment Standards Act is when an employee—usually a former employee—actually does file a complaint.

Left unchecked, violations of particular rights can become widespread over time. For example, violations of overtime and hours-of-work standards cut a wide swath across many industries and sectors. With one in 10 Canadian employees working unpaid overtime, one management-side law firm estimated that this represents more than \$22.5 billion in unpaid overtime and overtime premium pay. Imagine that: \$22.5 billion in unpaid overtime and unpaid overtime premium pay. That is the reality now.

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The majority of resources for enforcing employment standards still go to investigating individual complaints of employer violations. It was noted in 2005 that the practice of dealing with compliance one case at a time is expensive and risks overloading the available system. We have seen an increase in claims over the last five years from an average of 15,000 claims per year to over 20,000 claims per year. By this year, 2010, a backlog of worker

complaints against employers for unpaid wages has grown to 10,000. Today, some workers are waiting more than a year to have the Ministry of Labour begin investigation of their complaints of unpaid wages and entitlements. It's in this context that this government intends to make it even more difficult for the most vulnerable workers to get the pay—the vacation pay, the overtime pay and the regular pay—that they are entitled to.

Now, what is interesting is one of the things the government wants to boast about is that there will be the opportunity for some conciliation, but what we think that means is that the way it has been set up—we think that what has been set up is something which in fact will result in workers maybe getting something, but not getting what they're entitled to; that after workers have jumped through all the hoops and the barriers and been allowed to put forward a complaint, then they're going to be told, "Well, we want you to go through this so-called conciliation process." We think the result of that will be, once again, workers might get something, but they'll get less than what they're entitled to. How is that justice? How is that fairness?

The government may call this the Open for Business Act, but we think it's pretty clear, when you look at what is going to happen to the employment standards program and the employment standards branch and what happened in British Columbia, that what this really should be entitled is the worker sacrifice law—not the Open for Business law, the worker sacrifice law. Because if it's anything like British Columbia, you're going to see the most vulnerable workers—the workers who are most in need of protection of their rights are going to be denied. And as they have in British Columbia, those workers will simply, after trying to get through the hoops and barriers, throw up their hands and give up on the process.

Let's be clear: That is a denial of justice; that is a denial of fairness. That is not an advancement of process in Ontario; that is not an advancement of justice or fairness in Ontario. It is very clearly a denial and it's the most vulnerable workers, the lowest-paid workers, the workers working in the most precarious situations, who are going to make the sacrifice. That's why New Democrats cannot support this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm pleased to rise in the Legislature today to discuss the third reading debate for Bill 65, the Open for Business Act.

Since the McGuinty government came into office in 2003, we have demonstrated a commitment to working with business and to address barriers to investment and growth. Our balanced approach to strengthening the economy has lowered business costs while we've continued to invest in things that matter most to Ontarians: health, education, poverty reduction and the environment, all of which gives Ontario a competitive advantage.

As the economy continues to recover from the sharpest economic decline since the 1930s, we are continuing

to work to make Ontario the best place to start and grow a business. The Open Ontario plan, introduced as part of our 2010 provincial budget, is designed to open the province to new ideas and new investment. Bill 68, the Open for Business Act, supports our economic plan.

Make no mistake, in order to compete in the global economy, Ontario must be open for business. In order to secure the next generation of jobs for Ontario families, Ontario must be open for business. And in order to help Ontario small businesses to achieve their full potential, Ontario must be open for business.

As a former business owner and a former banker to business, I appreciate first-hand the challenges imposed on small and medium-sized enterprises and their activities. When I arrived at Queen's Park, the message was given to me loud and clear by members of the Small Business Agency of Ontario. That message was: In order for business to increase its competitiveness and improve its efficiencies, it requires governments to be more sensitive and responsive.

I am proud to be part of a government that not only listens, but has acted to implement sweeping changes that will enable greater opportunity for Ontario businesses. We call this change the Open for Business Act, and this is just one part of our Open Ontario initiative.

Three words sum up the more than 100 amendments from 10 ministries within the Open for Business Act: simpler, better, faster. Working with all ministries, Open for Business has three key areas of focus. One, modern government: We want a streamlined and focused regulatory environment that delivers results for business while protecting the public interest. Two, modern services: Our goal is to deliver better products and services, including service standards and guarantees that support the needs of businesses. And three, a new relationship with business: We want a working relationship between business and government that is open and responsive.

Throughout the Open for Business initiative, the government has consulted widely, seeking the best advice from business, industry, environmental and labour organizations. On August 3, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs heard from 16 such stakeholder and advocacy groups. Let's look at what some of the representatives had to say.

Ian Howcroft, vice-president of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Ontario, told the committee that "we are encouraged by this initiative and we think it goes a long way to help reduce the process cost and the regulatory cost, which will allow businesses to focus on what they can do to help the economy continue to grow and hopefully to thrive."

Kim Allen, the CEO and registrar of Professional Engineers Ontario, said, "In summary, Professional Engineers Ontario believes that the proposed changes to the Professional Engineers Act, as set out in schedule 2 of Bill 68, if enacted, will open up engineering and harmonize requirements, making them good for the public, good for business, and good for the profession."

The August committee hearings were just part of an ongoing dialogue between our government and the

business community on this bill. Throughout and through this dialogue we've learned that it isn't just big business that is supportive; the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has also praised the McGuinty government's efforts.

Satinder Chera, CFIB's Ontario director, had this to say when we introduced the bill: "For too long, governments at all levels have been oblivious to the negative consequences of too much regulation on the job-creating small business sector.... Today's announcement is another sign that Ontario is getting the message."

As a government, we recognize the importance of reducing the administrative burden on the small business community, and Bill 68 will deliver significant cost and time savings that will help entrepreneurs and small business owners focus their efforts on growing their business and creating jobs for Ontario families.

Environmental groups have also been part of the consultation process and recognize the importance of moving to a modern risk-based system.

Bob Oliver, executive director of Pollution Probe, had this to say: "Pollution Probe supports Ontario's commitment to build a streamlined modern approval system that is good for business while protecting the environment. The proposed risk-based approach could help achieve this balance. Pollution Probe looks forward to ongoing consultation on this process." He goes on to say, "From organization after organization, this message is clear: Ontario has listened and acted."

Another consultation process is our business sector strategy. We are reaching out to the key industries that drive the economy. In May, we met with BILD, the Building Industry and Land Development Association. We told them to give us their top five priorities, and the ministries responsible would have two months to address those priorities or explain why they cannot be addressed or deliver alternate solutions. We got back to them in June with meaningful proposals which addressed all five of their priorities.

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In August, we met with members of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, including representatives from the five auto assemblers building vehicles in the province, and are in the process of addressing their top five priorities.

This process will continue with more round tables with other sectors, including medical devices, information and communications, technology, hospital, and agriculture and agri-food. Our sector strategy speaks to a key focus of the proposed Open for Business bill: fostering an open and responsive relationship with business.

Bill 68 is evidence that Ontario continues to strive in creating a positive business environment. During our debate, we should keep this in mind. It's so important that Ontario has the best possible environment in which to do business. Companies, both large and small, are the lifeblood of communities across Ontario. Businesses help to pay for our hospitals, schools and infrastructure that support our way of life. Businesses provide the jobs that

our young people aspire to as they work their way through school, university, colleges, and apprenticeship programs.

The proposed Open for Business Act sets out a balanced approach, protecting the public interest and fostering business growth. It's an important undertaking that will ultimately benefit the whole province. With this act we have the opportunity to set in motion some very pragmatic and realizable changes to the way government operates.

Let's look at some of the ways in which the government, by proposing amendments to this act, can save businesses time and money to help them do what they do best. Businesses create jobs and drive our economy.

The Open for Business Act, if passed, would deliver meaningful changes, such as streamlining approvals and modernizing service delivery; harmonizing legislation with federal, provincial and municipal levels of government to lighten the administrative burden on business; delivering faster and easier government-to-business services while continuing to protect the public interest and provide appropriate government oversight; and providing a timely response to business and stakeholder requests in addressing specific issues.

Our balanced approach, together with stakeholder engagement, will bring costs and time savings to the business community and better protect the environment by focusing our efforts on high-risk activities.

The Employment Standards Act has been frequently cited, even here today, as a concern for business, and it is in an area where Bill 68 will provide significant improvement.

Applause.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Yes, yes.

Among other things, the proposed changes would encourage employees and employers to settle disputes at an early stage, avoiding unnecessary costs for both parties and allowing employment standards officers to focus on the current backlog of claims. By eliminating the claims backlog, the Ministry of Labour can focus on public education and outreach, and conduct more proactive inspections that would reach more workplaces.

Again, we have taken a balanced approach to growing the economy, and the proposed changes to the Employment Standards Act will deliver results for businesses while providing fairness for workers—workers who retain their rights. Their entitlements are not taken away. The employee continues to have options, especially those due to language or disability or fear or intimidation—they still have the right to seek protection.

The amendments to the Highway Traffic Act brought forward by the Ministry of Transportation will also harmonize Ontario's requirements with the rest of the provinces in a range of areas, including harmonizing vehicle width exemption with other provinces, phasing out the need for special permits relating to the length of recreational vehicles, and ensuring Ontario's vehicle length regulations for full trailers meet national obligations.

What will these changes all mean for the business community? Let me quickly explain. By not having to apply for special permits, businesses will reduce their operating costs, and the harmonization of requirements with other provinces will enhance the movement of goods and people. This is good for Ontario's trucking and passenger industries and our economy.

These changes would reduce the regulatory burden on business. It would also meet standards endorsed by the council of Ministers of Transportation in support of the Ontario-Quebec trade and co-operation agreement.

Furthermore, the proposed changes to the Dangerous Goods Transportation Act allows for the timely adoption of federal rules and would reflect the most current safety practices for transporting dangerous goods, a measure that will also reduce the duplication of efforts between the province and the federal government. One set of rules makes it easier for businesses to comply and will continue to keep our roads among the safest in North America.

In addition to reducing the administrative burden on Ontario businesses, Bill 68 also supports a strong workforce. The Ministry of the Attorney General has proposed amendments to the Professional Engineers Act that will align definitions and licence requirements with interprovincial and international expectations and improve self-governance mechanisms. This includes the removal of unnecessary citizenship requirements for individuals who apply for a professional engineer's licence. These amendments have been proposed by the Professional Engineers Ontario council, the governing body of the profession, and will make the administration of the engineering profession in Ontario more efficient.

In addition to responding to specific changes requested from stakeholders, the Open for Business Act will also modernize many pieces of existing legislation. Take, for example, the proposed modification to the Construction Lien Act, also brought forward by the Ministry of the Attorney General. If passed, these would be the first substantive changes to the legislation in 20 years. The proposed changes to the Construction Lien Act would help ensure that courts are only involved in construction disputes when needed, by broadening the definition of the term "improvement."

It would clarify the lien process for condominiums and the right to cross-examine those who have registered liens.

It would protect the rights of claimants with sheltered liens, regardless of whether the original lien has been dealt with or resolved.

The Council of Ontario Construction Associations represents more than 10,000 construction businesses that employ more than 400,000 skilled tradespeople and has come out in support of these proposed amendments.

COCA president Ian Cunningham says the following: "The Open for Business Act is a significant victory for COCA and for Ontario's institutional, commercial, industrial and heavy civil construction industry, especially small businesses.... COCA is very grateful to Attorney

General Bentley and to Economic Development and Trade Minister Papatello for making these changes a priority in the government's mandate."

The Open for Business initiative has already delivered some important results. In September 2009, the Ministry of the Environment eliminated a backlog of about 1,700 applications for environmental certificates of approval. In October 2009, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade launched an enhanced and updated Ontario business program guide, an online tool that provides links to almost 70 government programs and services for businesses across the province.

Ontario has modernized its regulatory policy. As of Nov 1, 2009, ministries must post all proposed regulations that affect Ontario businesses on the regulatory registry website, helping businesses to learn about regulatory proposals, provide input and plan for future requirements.

As part of the regulatory policy, we've also introduced twice-annual effective dates for regulations. Regulations affecting businesses now come into effect twice a year, on January 1 and July 1, bringing greater predictability and helping businesses to plan ahead. Ontario is the first jurisdiction in Canada to implement this type of initiative.

ServiceOntario, in collaboration with Industry Canada, launched a new business info line for business information about federal, provincial and municipal government services. The toll-free line uses a computerized interactive voice response system to connect callers to 12 high-demand, business-related government programs. Agents can also connect callers to an additional 70 programs covering more than 160 telephone numbers and hundreds of services to businesses.

Through the single business number initiative, Ontario businesses will be able to use their federal CRA business number for dealing with the provincial Ministries of the Environment, Revenue and Labour, with other ministries and agencies to be included later.

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Open for Business is leading an initiative to improve the quality of government service standards and guarantees for business so that businesses know what to expect when interacting with government.

As you can see, the Open for Business initiative has already delivered significant improvements for the business community. If passed, the proposed Open for Business Act, Bill 68, would continue that momentum.

How would we do this? It would make interfacing with the Ontario government (1) simpler, (2) better and (3) faster, for both large and small businesses in Ontario. It would enact changes to our three key areas of focus that I described. Once again, they are (1) modern government, (2) modern services and (3) a new relationship with businesses.

All of the ministries that brought forward amendments to be included in the Open for Business Act have taken great care to ensure that these changes will continue to protect consumers, workers and the environment. By

creating a more focused regulatory environment and providing clearer rules, we will ensure stronger and more rigorous compliance while improving the relationship between government and business.

The days of government and business acting in isolation are over. This legislation was brought forward in recognition that success in the global economy depends on the public and private sectors working together to address barriers to investment and growth.

The Open for Business Act, Bill 68, if passed, would deliver significant changes that will save Ontario businesses both time and money.

Let me say it again: We will continue to protect the public interest and provide appropriate government while removing unnecessary barriers to business. Securing our place as a leader in the global economy depends on Ontario being open for business. In order to secure the next generation of jobs for Ontario families, Ontario must be open for business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly pleased to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 68, the Open for Business Act, 2010, which was introduced by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and which has been so very, very capably addressed by our critic, Julia Munro. Certainly she has done an outstanding job now throughout the debate on this bill in identifying some issues that are obviously of concern not only to us but to the people who have contacted us in the business community and expressed concern. So I want to congratulate my colleague on the outstanding job she has done.

I think one of the things that stands out here is the fact that this bill is about red tape reduction. We're really happy that it is about red tape reduction because it's something that certainly our caucus, under our leader, Tim Hudak, has stressed repeatedly, and that is the need to take a look at the very burdensome red tape that business is finding to be there and asking that the government come up with positive proposals to do so. We are seeing some action on that front and we're certainly pleased about that.

I would just remind the members of this House that the last Progressive Conservative government also identified this as being a huge problem and a burden, costing businesses a tremendous amount of money, billions of dollars annually.

Business people today are unfortunately spending an increasing amount of their time filling out paperwork instead of being able to focus on growing their businesses or having the resources or the ability to hire more employees. We continue to face today, as we did in the past when we were in office, outdated or unnecessary regulations which sometimes can frustrate the creativity of entrepreneurs and innovators who, instead, should be trying to focus on creating new products and new jobs.

I would just mention to this House that this was an exercise that we went through ourselves, and it was a very successful exercise. We eliminated much un-

necessary and outdated regulation. I believe it was a fact that we revoked over 2,100 unnecessary regulations. We oversaw the development and passage of 15 different red tape reduction bills between 1997 and 2003.

I took a look at some of the bizarre regulations that we dealt with. For example, prior to us taking a look at this issue, a projectionist at a movie theatre was required to go through 800 hours of training while it only takes 600 hours of training to become a helicopter pilot. Another bizarre regulation that was on the books before we dealt with it was the fact that bus drivers, who are required to carry an axe on board in case of emergencies, were forbidden to carry this axe across the US border because it was deemed a dangerous weapon. Apparently, they were hiding their axes along the road near the border and picking them up when they came back. So you can see that sometimes we don't do what is necessary, and that is, get rid of some of the outdated and very bizarre regulations.

This bill addresses that particular issue; we're glad that it does. We know that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has been highlighting over many, many years the devastating effects of red tape on small businesses, and they did it again in January of this year. In fact, they released a report, as part of their first-ever Red Tape Awareness Week, which was entitled Prosperity Restricted by Red Tape, revealing that the annual cost associated with red tape in Canada totals an annual \$30.5 billion. They also identified the burden of government regulation as being a priority that needed to be addressed for businesses; there were 65% of people who said this was a priority for them. In fact, it was only second as a priority to the other burden that they were encountering, and that is the overall tax burden, which stands at 75%. We know that that burden is increasing for businesses when we take a look at electricity/energy prices, which are increasing; when we take a look at the HST, which is adding to the tax burden for these people. And of course, they have the health tax. This is an important issue—red tape—second only to the total tax burden.

The CFIB stated in 2007 that they were disappointed because the government hadn't been in a position where they were addressing this issue and seemed to be unaware of the size of the regulatory workload or the regulatory cost that government was imposing on small business. The CFIB said that additional regulation unfortunately comes out from all levels of government, whether it's the municipal, the provincial or the federal government. We need to make sure that we keep that in mind, because it's challenging enough today, in the economic environment we find ourselves in, for companies to be able to grow their business and hire new employees and remain competitive in a world economy.

So it's good that we're getting rid of red tape, and some of my colleagues this afternoon have referred to some of the specific examples where the red tape is being eliminated. Hopefully, the government will continue to evaluate, as we did over an eight-year period, the need to

continually revisit the red tape and regulatory workload. Hopefully, they'll also take a look at reducing the tax burden, not just on small business but also on families who are finding it difficult these days to make ends meet as they have encountered the additional cost of HST, electricity, auto insurance, health taxes and the eco tax, which will be coming back. People have less and less to spend each day on discretionary spending.

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Mr. John Yakabuski: Who passed all those laws?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: This was the Liberal government that has passed all these laws in recent years. The public can't believe how much the Premier has changed. They just don't feel that this is what they thought was going to happen. There seems to be a lack of understanding and appreciation for the burden that people are facing today.

CFIB says that the burden of government regulation now exceeds the small businesses' capacity to cope, and—this is another one—the government's capacity to administer, communicate or enforce. I suspect that all these new taxes that the government is introducing—and the most recent one is the child tax credit. I'm not sure that this government has the capacity to administer, communicate or enforce that, too, because the Premier on a daily basis is telling us, "We've not done a great job of communication," and we know that they aren't able to administer it. So there's a lot of difficulty today when it comes to some of the new initiatives that we're seeing.

Let's take a look at CFIB's report. They had some stark numbers in their 2010 report about government regulation on business owners. They said that 73% reported that it added significant stress to their lives. That's what I have heard from the small business community at home. But I would also to have say to you that I am hearing it now in my constituency office from people who are paying the HST and from people who are seeing their electricity and energy prices soaring. It is stressful.

CFIB also said in their report that 62% of people said that because of red tape and the burden, it's taking time away that they could be spending with their family and their friends; 51% said they spend a significant amount of time on regulation outside of normal working hours. So people are working harder but they're getting less. That's like the burden of the HST and the increased electricity and auto prices. People are working harder and harder, but they're seeing less and less. Some people have said to us that maybe family vacations or trips to Wonderland or to Marineland are things they can no longer do because they don't have the discretionary income.

Some 54% of businesses in this survey said it impeded their ability to compete with larger firms, and 63% said it significantly reduced their business productivity. They report that the cost of regulation, in 2008 in Ontario alone, was almost \$11 billion.

So I think you can see that this government must listen to small business. This bill does go down a path where there are some changes that are going to be made; some

of the red tape is going to be eliminated. But I hope that this is not the end, because certainly, as we look to the future, if this province is to remain competitive in the global economy, this government is going to have to do more than what we're seeing here today.

I'm going to leave the rest of my time to my colleague, who I know wants to address other parts of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Right here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Oh, I thought you were just kind of looking—

Hon. James J. Bradley: No.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I was very interested in debating this particular bill, which is very important to the members of the Ontario Legislature. I wanted to indicate, in speaking to the bill, when we say "open for business," some of the things that have been done for small business in this province. A lot of people don't realize, because there's a focus, and if you're in opposition naturally you're going to focus on what you think is negative, but because I was in opposition I remember that. I was not—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I must confess, I was not as effusive in the praise of the government of the day I should have been, perhaps, or might have been. But now that I'm in government, I can do that.

We have to talk about tax packages, for instance, when you're talking about small business and how you can help and how you're open for business.

A lot of people might have heard about one tax that the opposition talks about, but what they didn't realize was that a lot was done for small business. Small business creates so many jobs in this province. This is not to denigrate large businesses, which provide jobs for people in this province, but if you calculate it, I think you will find that medium-sized and small businesses have been generating a lot of the jobs that have been created in this province in recent years.

I was pleased to learn that our government, in its previous budget, indicated it was prepared to help small business. There were the capital taxes to be eliminated eventually—

Interjection: Lowered.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Lowered. We've had general tax cuts to the corporate sector and special business concessions have been made. Now, is this because the government wishes to show largesse to that community? Not necessarily. They recognize that it is important, if we're to be able to compete with other jurisdictions, that we provide a tax regime in which our businesses can flourish.

I know that when they canvassed both left-wing and right-wing economists, they said, "What is it that you can do for business to help them in the province?" There

were many things that were put out there. Consistently, they said, "You must revise the tax system." There were people who I would say were very small-c conservative and strong conservatives on one side, who said, "One thing you have to have is a harmonized sales tax," and then we had people on the left wing who said, "You know something? The harmonized sales tax is the way you have to go." Every government probably got to the edge of doing it and didn't do it for political reasons.

This government recognized that there was a change out there. We are going through the toughest recession that this country has seen in a long time, probably since the Great Depression. The world has gone through very tough economic times. So what may have been considered in the past a path that government wouldn't go down was a path that we were advised to go down by people left and right, whether it's the Centre for Policy Alternatives—and I happen to have a subscription to the magazine of the Centre for Policy Alternatives. There were the various agencies: the C.D. Howe Institute, of course, and the Fraser Institute. So you had people left and right who were making recommendations.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Jim Flaherty?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, one of the people who really made the case over and over again—I remember our government being chastised by Jim Flaherty. No, we're not supposed to—I guess we're allowed to say it if they're outside the House, but the federal finance minister, James Flaherty, said that he was very critical of the Ontario government for not harmonizing the tax system in this province, and all of his members in the House of Commons voted for a bill that enabled this to happen. So when I heard some of the people on the other side of the House being critical of that, I kept looking and saying, "How did, perhaps, MP Cheryl Gallant vote on this?"

Mr. Jeff Leal: Dean Del Mastro from Peterborough.

Hon. James J. Bradley: How, perhaps, did MP Dean Del Mastro of Peterborough vote on that legislation? Because you must recognize—as I know you would, Mr. Speaker, through you—that this could not have taken place without the support of the federal government, the Harper government: Prime Minister Harper and his various colleagues in the Conservative caucus federally, who, to a person, if they were in the House, voted for this legislation that enabled the harmonization of the tax system in this province. And a former colleague of many of the people who are here in this House strongly made that recommendation.

But I thought, you know, perhaps when we're trying to have something that's open for business in this province—maybe former Premiers were opposed. And then I was listening to a report where former Premier Michael Harris, who served this province for close to eight years, said he was in favour of the harmonization of the taxation system. He said it's good for business and ultimately good for the province. I thought, there's another credible source who is putting forward a proposal in this case. Then I remembered I sat across from a

distinguished gentleman, the former leader of the Conservative Party in this House, now a talk-show host, John Tory—drive at 5 with John Tory.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's on right now.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I listen to that very often. They asked him and he said, "You know, to be honest, if I want to be honest with people"—and John wanted to be honest with people all the time. He said, "It should be done. The government is doing the right thing."

So as part of the package of opening Ontario for business, there are a number of initiatives that we are taking in this province. A reliable system of electric power in this province: Unfortunately, over the years, and this happens, the government had neglected the power system in this province. That grid had to be upgraded. I know in eastern Ontario I used to hear members say that the grid must be upgraded considerably. They said that you had to refurbish the existing plants that are out there that are nuclear plants that had to be refurbished. They said also, "If you want to have Ontario open for business, perhaps you want to get some new generation." My good friend the member for northern Ontario, when he was in government, cancelled the

Conawapa project, which would have given us relatively cheap power—

Mr. Jeff Leal: From Manitoba.

Hon. James J. Bradley: —from Manitoba. But that was cancelled by the previous NDP government. I believe they didn't do it to be malicious. It was just a mistake that was made in cancelling that particular project. It would have been very good for the province.

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: But all of this—because the person sitting in the Chair says, justifiably, "How does this tie in with opening Ontario for business?" Also, he looks at the clock and says that we are reaching very close to 6 o'clock.

I wanted to share a few thoughts with my colleagues on the other side that perhaps they hadn't heard in previous debate.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you for the co-operation.

It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until Thursday, September 16, at 9 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1802.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
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Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature



**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 16 September 2010

Jeudi 16 septembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 16 September 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 16 septembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY TAX CREDIT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR LES ACTIVITÉS DES ENFANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 15, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit / *Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour les activités des enfants.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'll take my two minutes this morning to talk about the activity tax credit, but I just want to give a bit of a plug here this morning. The Peterborough Lakers are now in the Mann Cup, which is the Canadian national championship for lacrosse, in Peterborough against the New Westminster Salmonbellies.

Many of the players on the Peterborough Lakers—John Grant Jr., Scott Self, John Tavares—were youngsters who came up through the Peterborough minor lacrosse system. Lacrosse in Peterborough is almost like the Peterborough Petes to hockey. We've always been a community that has been recognized for both hockey and lacrosse.

For those young folks in Peterborough who have the opportunity to sign up for minor lacrosse—Karen and I signed up our own children, Braden and Shanae, a week ago for Peterborough minor basketball. When I had that opportunity, I was chatting with a large number of parents at the signup, and they were very enthusiastic about this tax credit, which is retroactive to January 1, 2010. So I encourage people to keep their receipts for signing up for those spring sports like soccer.

Now we're moving into the fall for basketball and hockey, and since we have a really aggressive and very extensive minor sport system in the Peterborough area, I encourage those parents to take advantage of this. It's

great that it allows people—we have Market Hall in Peterborough, which has a young people's theatrical program, and they'll be able to sign up for that this fall. This is something that I think is seen as a very progressive measure throughout Ontario.

I encourage people, if they want to take the opportunity, to come to Peterborough Memorial Centre. The Lakers play both Friday night and Saturday night. Tickets are reasonable: \$24 for an adult. This is an opportunity to see—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to respond to the excellent presentation that was made by my colleague the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka regarding this children's tax credit that was introduced by the government this week.

I think this is certainly an acknowledgement on the part of the government of the anger we are seeing throughout the province of Ontario since they introduced their HST on July 1. They've already had to give back a tax credit to people—just for one year, mind you—in order to deal with some of the anger we're seeing out there. But I think one of the issues that probably hit families the hardest was the HST, the additional 8% on children's activities, whether it's sport or music or others. So now the province is saying, "Okay, if you spend \$500, we'll give you a tax credit of \$50." Well, I would say to you that that isn't a lot of money, and I would say that it is also not fair.

There are many people in this province who can't pay money in order to enrol their daughter or son in activities. I know that from personal experience. I know that from the people I meet in my riding of Kitchener—Waterloo. They would love to enrol their children in skating lessons, hockey, music or what have you. But I'll tell you: It costs far more than that, and this measly little \$50 tax credit isn't going to help these particular families.

Again, this government knows that Ontarians are angry with the HST—it's going to cost them at least \$1,000 extra per year—and they're just trying to respond and deflect.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'd just like to thank the member from Peterborough and the member from Kitchener—Waterloo for their comments on this bill.

The whole idea of the bill is not to pay the whole shot. This is just to provide assistance to families. I have

nieces and nephews; the extra \$50, or \$100 if you've got a couple of children, will help.

It's interesting to hear the criticism of this. When the federal Conservative Party put in a tax credit for this, this must be good, but this one is considered bad. The fact that it will be able to assist families with sports, music and other things that enrich children's lives—it helps. It's not supposed to be a subsidy; it's just supposed to be something that will help kids become physically involved, something that will help them to go to sign up for programs.

0910

We had more calls after this bill was announced two weeks ago, when this program was announced at my office, than we did on July 2, because parents were happy with this. They said, "You know what? It doesn't subsidize the whole thing, but it gives us a little bit of assistance." For the other party to slam it, for the opposition party to say this is not—I remember in 1997, when payments were sent out across the province to parents, and they were raving about what a good thing this was. But you combine this with the tax savings that have been presented for low-income families—we doubled the Ontario tax benefit to \$1,100. The subsidies that have been provided, the reduction in the income tax—all of these things are part of our new tax plan that we are moving forward with to support low-income families, to support Ontario families and to provide a little bit of relief. I'm happy with this, with what we're proposing, and I'm looking forward to hearing the rest.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Frank Klees: I don't think anyone can argue with the fact that we want to encourage families and make it easier for families to encourage their young people to be involved in sporting activities. No one is arguing that. What we take umbrage with is the fact that this sop is coming from a government that on the one hand has reached into the pockets of hard-working families and basically ripped out \$1,000 through their HST, and now they want applause from members of the opposition for the measly \$50 that they're going to return so that the child can participate in sports.

Let me ask the member this: What sport is there where \$50 is going to make a significant difference, given the fact that every time a family takes their children and puts them in the car and fills that car up, they're going to be paying at least \$500 a year more simply to fill up the tank of gas that takes the kids to and from their activities? This is simply one more example of this government being in such disconnect with hard-working families in this province. It's a shame. The fact of the matter is that what this government should be doing is recognizing that they're making it virtually impossible for families to continue to be engaged in recreational activities through their continuous plan of tax and spend, and the result of that is that people in this province are angry with them. This will not in any way make them feel any better about this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Parry Sound–Muskoka has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, first of all, to the member from Peterborough for his comments. I was wondering when he was going to get to Bill 99, because it did sound a bit like an advertisement for lacrosse in Peterborough for the first part of his comments—although he did mention the cost of going to the lacrosse game that he was advertising as being \$24 for a ticket. Just think about it. This bill is going to give families \$50 back. Well, their \$50—if just two of them go to this lacrosse game, they will have used the full \$50. That's what we're talking about: \$50. I think that shows just how little a difference it's actually going to make.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo correctly pointed out that there is a lot of anger out there, that families are concerned about the fact of the HST, that 8% going on the gas when they drive to their soccer game or their hockey game, about other increased costs like the eco tax—which has been put on the shelf, for a month or two anyway—the extra cost of insurance, the significantly higher costs of energy that are happening day by day in the province. So families don't have any money left; they don't have the money left to be able to spend the \$500 to get the 10% credit so they'll get the \$50 back.

As has been pointed out, the government has been reaching into the pockets of families. They're taking \$1,000 out just in the HST, and there's just no money left.

I'd also like to thank the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for his comments, and of course the member from Newmarket–Aurora, who did point out that the McGuinty government keeps reaching into the pockets of those families.

There's nothing left. Families can't afford that \$500 to be able to get the \$50 back.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Some pieces of legislation that come before us are very large, some are very complex, some have a huge impact on the lives of people in this province and some are just puppies. It's hard not to like a puppy: It's little; it's cute. It doesn't bring home the bacon and, frankly, a picture of a puppy on an election flyer is something that everyone would love. I expect that this piece of legislation is going to be part of that.

I just want to note that I will be sharing some of my time with my colleague Mr. Miller from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

I can see this piece of legislation now in a television commercial, with kids coming home from their hockey game, parents working through their tax forms, looking up, smiling and being happy that for all the money they've put out, they're going to get back \$50. And I think the amount may well not be mentioned in the commercial. But this particular piece of legislation can't miss; it has got to be there because it's going to be seen as a friendly puppy helping a family.

But, Speaker, as you know, as I know and as everyone else in this Legislature knows, people are going to be facing increased costs to send their kids to hockey or to take their kids to a live performance. People are going to be faced with increased costs from the HST that will more than eat up what's brought before us in this piece of legislation.

As you well know, the simple reality is that in this province, in schools, administrations have difficulty getting together the money to actually provide school bands with instruments. As I said when this bill was introduced, a friend of mine works in a public school in Toronto, and when they find that an instrument is gone, that's it; it gets taken out of the curriculum. They don't have other money. Some schools do much better because they have the ability, because of the population they serve, to raise money at school events, and they buy instruments, which is a wonderful thing. But, frankly, in all schools across this province, there should be adequate funding for arts and for music so that every child who has that ability or every child who has not yet discovered that they have that ability gets a chance to participate in the arts. This bill will not deal with that shortfall in our education system.

When this bill was introduced the other day, I was talking to my colleague the member from Kenora-Rainy River, who said that his calculation of this bill is that it wouldn't even cover the HST on the hockey fees that he pays every year for his children, who are active in amateur hockey. I have to tell you, it's not a bad idea to have a refundable tax credit, because there are a lot of people whose income is so little that they actually wouldn't be able to claim simply a deduction; they need a repayment. But, in general, those are people who don't have 500 bucks to scratch together to put into fees at the beginning of the year, and have to wait six months, eight months, a year before they get their \$50 back. That impact on those people is going to be quite low. What they need is adequate funding of our schools so that sports and the arts are provided at a very high level, with good quality, so that they don't have to worry about scraping together the money to send their kids to these particular activities. Those activities are already provided as part of what we give to our children in this province.

0920

There are a lot of other areas where one can speak about the reduction in affordability of this province because of initiatives of this government—reductions in affordability because this government is spending money unwisely. I cite the smart meters as a particular case in point—situations where people are going to see reductions in their standard of living, not because, in fact, we're expanding public services, but because we're spending money stupidly. This bill doesn't do that. It gives people a break. It's \$50. I say to you and I say to all those who may at some point receive that \$50: Don't spend it all in one shot.

It isn't a big bill. I don't have long comments. I cede the floor to my colleague Mr. Miller.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: As my colleague pointed out—and of course I heard some talk from the other side, “Well, are you going to vote for it?” Of course we are. We're not going to take anything out of the taxpayers' pockets. However, once again it's a quarter or a 10th of what they should be doing. It's one of those half-baked bills that you have no choice other than to support, because they will turn around and say, “Oh, you're against children,” or, “You're against this” if you don't vote for it. It's a joke.

Let's talk about the \$50. Let's talk about that. Okay, I've got two kids in hockey, let's say. Average ice-skate sharpening is 5 bucks. So for two kids, that's 50 bucks—five skate sharpenings is my break. Wow, that's a biggie. Twenty-five bucks each over a whole season, and they probably get their skates sharpened 20 or 15 times over a season. I used to sharpen my skates before every game, when I played. So that's a real joke.

Let's talk about hockey registration. Oh, they're probably 160 bucks or 150 bucks just to register, plus your HST. Well, there goes the 50 bucks—plus. Let's talk about any sport you want. What is 50 bucks going to do?

Let's talk about administration costs for sending out the cheque. There's going to be something there.

Let's talk about the service clubs. They didn't even mention the service clubs in this bill. In my riding, 20% of the people are living below the poverty level. They can't afford to put one kid, let alone two kids, into sports, and they're going to allow them, for \$500, 50 bucks. They don't have the \$500 to put into sports. What do they do? They go to the service clubs—the Lions Club, the Optimist Club. These clubs, through their generosity, support the kids in different types of sports, donate, buy their shirts, buy their sweaters and buy their skates, or whatever they need. They can't declare it because they're not a family. But they're supporting hundreds of kids of my community. What break do they get? Nothing.

Fifty dollars? What's that going to do? I don't know. Jeez, a haircut is 20 bucks. Fifteen bucks for a haircut. I don't know.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Well, vote against it.

Mr. Paul Miller: So when they sit there and say, “Vote against it,” that is such nonsense. They know, any party knows, they're not going to take anything from the voter if it's a benefit. They know that. For them to do that is a cheap shot, and for them to say—of course we're going to support it. But you know what one member of the official opposition said here yesterday? He said that it's peanuts. I wouldn't even classify it as peanuts; I'd say it's fine grind. It's minuscule.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: What did you say?

Mr. Paul Miller: Fine grind. It's nothing. It'll be eaten up in the first day of their registration.

Don't fool yourselves out there: The government's giving you a little piece. There will be more gifts coming along as it gets near election day. Little tidbits will be coming out—Timbits, I call them—to entice the voters to

vote for this party again. I hope they're not fooled. I hope they don't take these little Timbits and think how wonderful the Liberals are. Please, don't let them fool you again, because once again they're going to break 200, 300 promises down the road, like they always do after an election.

When I look at this whole situation and all the bills that are going to come forward in the next few months, trust me, it's not going to be any great benefit to the people of Ontario. It's simply to con them into voting for the same government, the same old, same old. There's not a lot to say about this, because the bill is three pages long. It is a nothing bill—another nothing bill, I might add—and it will do nothing to support or help the people in this province for their sports activities. Believe me, it is a zero bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. The honourable member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to join the debate this morning, which is very lively and heated. But I'd like to begin my comments calm and to the point. This is good for Ontario families. Bill 99, the Children's Activity Tax Credit Act, is good for Ontario families. We can hear all the complaints in the world from the opposition. I think the reason we're hearing such fussiness and emotion this morning is because the opposition knows it's a good thing for kids and a good thing for Ontario families, and we're hearing that from them.

We've heard the opposition tell us that this is a joke.

Mr. Paul Miller: It is.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's no joke to help Ontario families. The McGuinty government has a list of concerted efforts focused to help Ontario families and help Ontario children. We've just seen the implementation of full-day learning in the province of Ontario. This is another step forward to help Ontario families.

Frankly, to sit here in the House and hear the opposition complain that it's not enough, it's not enough—my goodness, they sound like my three sons: "Mom, it's not enough. We want to do more. It's not enough." The adult thing to do here is to say, "It's a step forward." It's a modest step forward, but at the end of the day, it is a step forward to help Ontario families.

I have three sons. Fifty dollars per son is \$150. When you couple that with the federal tax credit of \$75, I'm now receiving \$125 per child, times three.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a lot of money.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Thank you. This is a lot of money. These are difficult times, and the McGuinty government recognizes that these are difficult times in the province of Ontario. These are difficult times around the world. So it's unacceptable for anyone to stand in this House and publicly say that this is a joke. It is no joke that Ontario families are looking for assistance, and the McGuinty government is giving them that assistance. Bill 99 today assists parents to allow their children to partici-

pate in physical and non-fitness activities across the province of Ontario, and I'm proud to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I want to applaud the member who has just spoken. I think he makes excellent points based on his own personal experience of having children who are involved in sports activities. I think he has pointed out how minuscule the impact of this tax is on families like his own. But I think what is more important is the fact that this tax is an attempt on the part of the McGuinty government to respond to the anger that people in the province of Ontario are feeling because of the increased cost of living.

On July 1, this government introduced the HST. We know it's going to cost the average family about \$1,000 extra a year and it's going to hit children's activities, because what has happened is that children's activities are now of course subject to the HST, which they were not before. It has increased the cost to families for the participation of their children in activities. So do you know what? This hasn't really been done in an attempt to give back to families; it's a recognition of the fact that Ontarians are angry. They're angry about the HST. The government now probably realizes they've made a mistake. They've already had to give the public one rebate for the first year of the HST.

But you know, this HST and these increased taxes are just part of what Ontarians are seeing. They're seeing increased energy rates, which are really going through the roof and are going to cause increasing hardship. They're seeing their auto insurance rates go up. There was an attempt by this government to impose an eco tax, which we'll see again. So this tax credit, much as it is good for children, doesn't achieve its objective.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to rise and make comments about this particular bill. I do remember when the official opposition came forward and were giving families, I believe, \$100 back. It was something that Jesse Ventura had come up with as governor of Minnesota. I think they rather copied Mr. Ventura at the time, and they thought it was wonderful. Here we have a possibility where a family of two could get \$100 back, which would be a similar amount of money as the official opposition did. Of course, if they have more children than that in one family, it would be \$50 times whatever that number might be. I also want to point out that this is also available at \$100 for disabled children.

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There is no mail-out. The opposition are talking about the cost of mail and stamps and postage. This is a tax credit; it's on their tax form. It will be done automatically. There is no mailing involved here. Further to that, even people who file and pay no income tax in that particular year will still qualify. So it's good for everyone concerned who files.

Not only does this cover sports, but it covers music, as has been mentioned, and Cubs, Scouts and Girl Guides.

So there's a wide range of opportunities here. I think it's going to help families overall. Seventy-five million dollars is a sizable amount of money, I would suggest to all who are listening here. I think it goes a long way to recognizing, on our government's part, the challenges that families face. I think it is a credible and worthwhile endeavour, and I look forward to seeing just who does vote for and against this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to respond and, I hope, correct some of the misimpressions from the folks across the way. I really am offended by the notion that a tax credit that is worth 10%, or in the case of disabled children 20%, of the value of what you're claiming is somehow peanuts. I challenge you to find tax credits that are in excess of that. That is a very generous tax credit, and in particular it's a refundable tax credit, which does help low-income folks. So if in fact you don't owe income tax because you have low income, if you file for this tax credit, you will get a cheque in the mail even if you don't owe taxes because it's a fully refundable tax credit.

I had an opportunity to do an announcement in my community. The reaction that I have gotten has been 100% positive. In particular, not only are the sports organizations very pleased that they will now be able to essentially double, because they're getting the federal Tory tax credit—which apparently the opposition thinks is good; they will now be getting double the tax credit that they qualify for now. They think it's great. The arts organizations, people who do music lessons, drama lessons, dance lessons, tutoring for your child, all sorts of things that were not previously available, are absolutely thrilled that they're now included.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): NDP members have up to two members for a response.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity and the efforts of my colleagues from Kitchener–Conestoga, Kitchener–Waterloo, Chatham–Kent–Essex and Guelph to address my very brief remarks. In fact, I think the commentary may exceed the time that I actually spoke about the bill.

Let's be clear about this: People in Ontario appreciate the idea that they would get some of the extra money they're spending on the HST back on their income tax, and those who can afford to put the up-front cash out for arts or sports activities will be able to garner a credit of up to \$50. You know, we throw the \$50 figure around a lot; it may well just be ten bucks. It may be 15; it may be five. I don't know precisely what people will get, but one can't assume that one will always get that maximum fee of \$50.

I liken this bill to a puppy because, in fact, it isn't something you can hate; it just isn't going to actually make the difference that needs to be made for the families in this province. The people in this province are facing a situation where schools often are in bad physical condition, where students don't get access to arts pro-

grams the way they need to get them, where parents come to me utterly frustrated about the lack of daycare and the lack or the slowness with which early learning is being introduced to the extent that some will see nothing until their children are too old to benefit from such a program. Those are the large items. Those are the big issues that need to be addressed.

What we have before us today is an item that will show up in political television commercials, that will show up on flyers, but in the end, it won't address the fundamental problems facing the families in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It is a pleasure to rise this morning to talk about the Ontario children's activity tax credit.

Just before I get into that, a member from the opposition, in one of the two-minute responses, made a comment about the Peterborough Lakers: that the \$24 was an advertisement, and "How much is \$50 going to buy you?" The opposition seems to talk about doom and gloom—and I understand that; that's part of their job—but they should really fill in some of the blanks. I'm going to use the Lakers tickets that the member brought up. Those tickets probably have gone down this year. Do you know why? Because the former entertainment tax of 10% has now gone down to 8%. When you combine the two, it's 13%; before it used to be 15%. They don't talk about that.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Three thousand people on Saturday night.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: You talk about 3,000 people in that stadium. If anything, those tickets are more affordable this year than they were last year.

They don't tell the whole—can I say "truth"? The whole story.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: The whole story.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: The whole story. They should say that—the whole truth.

Interjection.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's not enough. I haven't heard one of the members from either opposition party tell us—what would you have done? How much would you have given back to these families? I hear that \$50 is not enough, that it doesn't do anything.

I'm a proud father of four kids and the grandfather of nine grandkids, and I was just taking a quick count; six of my nine grandkids are involved in some type of activity that's covered by this. Doing some quick math, between the federal and the provincial, it's about \$600 to my immediate family a year.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: That's a lot.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: That's a lot of money. So for the members of the opposition to scoff and laugh at that, I just don't get it.

I remember—some of us were here who are sitting here this morning—when the federal government introduced their \$50 credit. I remember distinctly when the opposition, both parties, petitioned this government to do

the right thing like the federal Harper government did. It took us a couple of years—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: It was a great idea.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It was a great idea.

Frankly, we're not supposed to talk about what happens within caucus meetings, but I remember some of our members lobbying the Minister of Finance, who I think was Mr. Sorbara at that time, that we should carbon-copy what Prime Minister Harper and his government did back in those days so that we were in sync.

Yes, it's \$50, but I can tell you that some families—and I'm talking about families where mom or dad has lost their job. That's a reality we face in this global experience of challenges in the last couple of years. To a family, kids in general—and I would say in general—come first in the sense that any parent will do anything for their child. Yes, they were struggling to register little Johnny for hockey or dance or music lessons, but they knew how important that was.

I can tell you that what I heard, contrary to what some of the members are saying they're hearing now, is: "We need some help. If there's anything you can do, let's keep those kids active; let's keep those kids off the streets; let's maybe take those kids away from playing their video game in front of the TV and give them some physical exercise, whether it's dance or those things." I believe and I know that this is the right move.

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The question is always, is it enough? Frankly, I'm not sure what is enough, and I would encourage the members from the opposition, instead of saying, "No, no, no, no," that this is not good, to tell us what they think is good. I hope, although they're talking the way they're talking here during the debate, that in their heart they find a way to support this, because it might be little, as they say, but it's better than what they've got to offer. I haven't heard from them—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: It's just negative.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: They're just being negative. The talk is that it's a disgrace; it's a shame; we should be embarrassed. Well, a \$75-million commitment to give back to some folks, especially dealing with kids' activities—I think that's a lot of money. It might not be a lot of money to them, but where I come from, in my family, that is a lot of money.

I'm really struggling with this, "Oh, it's a disgrace. It's only \$50." Well, I can tell you, in my household, and I'm sure in a lot of households, we spend time clipping coupons for 50 cents because when we go to the grocery store, that 50 cents is something—20 cents, \$1. We spend time clipping those coupons so that when we go to the grocery store or when we go to buy—you clip a coupon for when you get a pair of hockey gloves to save \$5.

Interjection.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: We do it at our home. It's money. It's really hard to wrap your head around those kinds of things.

I talked a little bit about how this tax credit emulates somewhat the federal tax credit, but I want to take a

minute to point out that yes, it emulates it, but it goes two steps further. We could have emulated the federal tax credit program when the federal government did it; the Ministry of Finance assessed it. Based on what we hear on the street on the federal tax credit—which, by the way, was applauded by the official opposition when that happened, and it was only \$50. It was good then; it's not good now.

What did we hear? Kids taking dance lessons or those other activities were not dealt with accordingly as someone who played hockey or soccer. I'm going to talk about some of those different things. We hear a lot of that.

The other thing that it did is—this is probably using Tory talk—it benefited the wealthy, the people who could afford to put their kids in the sports activities. Frankly, where I come from, there are a lot of families that are in an income bracket that don't pay any taxes. They were shut out; totally ignored. The people who need the tax credit the most were shut out.

So what did we do? We fixed those two things. Our list of activities that people can claim up to \$50 for, I'll tell you, just taking a quick glance at some of the obvious things, it's double or triple what the federal credit qualifies for. But what I think is even more important, or just as important, is the fact that the families that have an income level where they don't pay much tax or don't pay any tax are actually going to get a cheque back for up to 50 bucks. How can we argue with that? I just don't get where the opposition is coming from.

What have I heard in the week or so since we made this announcement? Just the other night I was at the Cobourg Cougars opening game, and unfortunately they played the Trenton Golden Hawks—both teams are in my riding.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Oh, dear. Who do you cheer for?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Who do we cheer for? In my mind, both teams won, but the Cobourg Cougars did win 4 to 1. But both teams won.

So what did I hear in those arenas? What did I hear when I went to my granddaughter's hockey practice last week? I think my daughter was the first one to say, "Dad, that was a good thing." And I'm going to admit that she said, "But it could have been a little bit better; it could have been a little bit more." That's the reality. When is enough? But then, as I talked to some parents, they told me the same thing. Yes, some of them did say, "Well, it could have been a little bit bigger cheque." Yes, I will not lie about that. But all I can say is, they thanked us for putting the initiative forward.

In the limited time we have here, I wanted to talk about some of the activities that this covers: badminton, ball hockey, chess, choir, baseball, cooking for kids—organized classes where they pay a fee—different crafts courses, drama, dance, even first aid courses, Girl Guides and Boy Scouts—and even for uniforms. So, if somebody doesn't tell me this is a benefit to Main Street Ontario families, I must be missing something.

As we move forward and hopefully this legislation gets passed, the other thing that I want to point out is that

when it gets passed, it will be effective January 1, 2010. So, for some, this money they have spent already, they qualify, and in the seven years I've been here, there are not too many times that that happens. Normally, we do something and it's two years down the road. We'll get there. We're going back, because we know this is important; this is something the families were asking for. I commend the Minister of Finance for understanding, under these difficult times—\$75 million is a lot of money for government to commit to on a permanent basis. This is not a one-timer; this is on a permanent basis.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: And it's indexed.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Yes, and it is indexed.

So I can tell you that this is good news. The member opposite from the third party can see this in a brochure.

Interjection.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm proud to put it in my brochure. I will put it in my brochure, and I would hope that the member opposite will put it in his brochure. If you're truly representing your constituents, yes, you want to report the doom and gloom, but tell them about the good things for their kids and families. Please—since he offered that, whether we're going to put it in my brochure, I probably will, because I'm proud of what this government has done. I'm proud to be part of a government that cares about families. I would encourage the members of the opposition to put that in their brochures, because the more we can tell people—because frankly, sometimes, one of the things I find is that governments have a lot of programs. Sometimes they're cumbersome, and sometimes they don't know. When I go and speak to different groups—seniors, for example—about some of the tax credits, they don't know they even exist. So the more we can make them aware of it—I would encourage members of the opposition to help us tell the good story, to put this in their brochures, put this in their householders, put this in their monthly, weekly, yearly newsletters, because we want to make sure that those families get the benefit from this.

I've talked about some of the things that are eligible, and the list is fairly long. We're talking about, for example, kids taking ski lessons. We live in Ontario. Not very far from the GTA, we have some world-class, state-of-the-art skiing facilities. I'm not a skier, but I know that I visit them, and kids taking skiing lessons in the middle of winter—what an opportunity, and they will be able to get some credit back for that.

One of the things I've failed to mention is that kids with disabilities are always faced with different challenges because, whether it is a piece of equipment or whether it's registration because it needs more attention, those fees are always higher. I was in the beautiful hamlet of Bewdley on Sunday—

Mr. Jeff Leal: That's a great spot. They used to have a newspaper, the Bewdley Bugle.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: That's right—for the opening of their renewed sports centre, a state-of-the-art facility, a beautiful arena. There is this one woman who has a challenged daughter—they moved from the Toronto area, I

believe, some three or four years ago—and she started a sledge hockey team in beautiful Bewdley in the municipality of Hamilton township, just north of Cobourg. Of course, Bewdley is on the south shore of beautiful Rice Lake. I had an opportunity to talk to this mother. They're getting calls from all over southern Ontario about having their child take part in this sledge hockey team.

0950

First of all, it's very affordable. It's in a small community; their expenses are not all that great. The community, the municipality, because of the programs they're offering—and it's really welcome news—are helping them out with some ice fees and so forth, so it does make it very, very attractive.

So the parents of those kids who take part in this sledge hockey team are going to benefit by about \$100 from that provincial—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Per child.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Per child.

I was going to say that we know what it's like to have somebody disabled in your family, but I really can't say that because I don't have any. But I can only picture it; I can only think. So anything that we can do to help those folks I know they'll appreciate. I know for a fact they'll appreciate it.

As my time ticks down, regardless of what folks from the opposition would say to you—"That's not enough"—I want to empower them for a couple of things. Let them put their best foot forward and tell us what this should really be.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: What would they do?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: What would they do? Because it's not only on this issue: The doom and gloom parties of the opposition—they talk about doom and gloom—have never put their best foot forward to let us know what they're going to do. All they can tell you is that the sky is going to fall in every day. Well, you know, the sky's not going to fall in—at least, I don't think it is.

More importantly, although they criticize this to no end, I know in their own ridings and in their own constituencies, there are families with kids, and those families could benefit from this. Like I said a minute ago, although on the surface they seem to be opposing this, I want them to tell those parents, "Yes, it might not be enough"—let them even put their own spin on it—"but please take part. Take the benefit that's available to you." I would encourage you, I am asking you, to tell the families in your own ridings that if—when—this legislation is passed, they're entitled to that extra incentive at the end of each year.

To close off, I really want to encourage all sides that when it comes to helping families, when it comes to helping kids, we need to park our partisan hats somewhere and do what's best for families. I think this is one of those things that's best for families.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to respond to the speech from the member from Northumberland—Quinte

West. The member was making my point for me, in that what I've been saying is that this is more about next year's election, and it's for the government to be seen to be giving some money back to help families out.

He raised the question. He said, "It's going to take effect January 1, 2010. It's retroactive, and that's very unusual." I think those were his words. Guess what? Why is it retroactive? What's next year? It's an election year. So, come spring, all of these families are going to be receiving the \$50. I think it's the government's hope that they'll remember where it came from. I think that answers the question about why it's retroactive.

But I simply have to say that the reason we're critical of it—I'll respond to one other question. They asked: What would we have done? We wouldn't have been a tax-and-spend government like this government has been. That has necessitated them to have their hand in the pocket of taxpayers continually for such things as the HST, which, as the member from Kitchener–Waterloo pointed out, is a \$1,000 extra charge.

The list goes on and on and on of the extra charges that Ontario families are facing. So \$50 is not going to be very significant for them when they're paying an extra \$1,000 for the HST and when every week there's another announcement about energy costs going up. There was 10%, and then there's the HST on it. Then there are the smart meters, which are putting the rate up dramatically for prime-time use. We had the eco tax, which has disappeared for a few months, but it's going to be coming back. We have, of course, the health tax this government brought into effect. We have auto insurance that, if you have the same coverage, is going up. If you happen to live in the city of Toronto, you have significantly increased charges.

So \$50 isn't going to mean that much when taxes have gone up so much under this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions or comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to address the member from Northumberland–Quinte West's comments. He mentioned that he has a large family and that he is very proud of the fact that they're getting all these breaks.

But what he doesn't mention is the fact that you have to spend \$500 to get the \$50. I don't know what part of the province he's from, but in my area, they don't have the \$500 in the first place to even get the tax credit—in fact, they can't even put one child in—because 20% of the people in my riding are below the poverty level. They go to the service clubs, they go to get help from the community, and they can't declare it.

Then he said that it's going to be \$100 for kids who are challenged. Well, \$100—a lot of these kids require special equipment for sledding and that. Are they going to pay HST on that? I think they are. Are they going to pay HST on the registration fee? I think they are. You can kiss that \$50 or \$100 goodbye there; that's a start.

What the member doesn't mention is that most people in this province aren't in the six figures in the money they receive. Naturally, grandpa and grandma can kick

out extra money if the kids can't afford to play because their working parents can't afford it; they go to grandpa and grandma. Let me assure the member that most of the people in this province don't make \$100,000 a year. That's another bit of a grey area that he didn't talk about.

The other member talked about the 100% response from her sports clubs and her community. I'll tell the truth: I never received one phone call or one email about this great \$50—not one. I don't know who the 100% are. I guess 100% of two phone calls might be 100% of two phone calls.

They're really putting a grey area around this big break. Trust me: This is no big break. He asked what we would do. We would give a heck of a lot more, because you've spent hundreds of millions of dollars on—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm very pleased to respond to the speech from the member from Northumberland–Quinte West. I think we'll all want to support any kind of a tax credit to young people. I know many of us have children and grandchildren who participate in a lot of sports, and sure, \$50 is \$50. Whether it's \$25, \$50, \$100—whatever it may be—we'll take any help we can get.

I think what he failed to mention is that for every man, woman and child in the province of Ontario—the public accounts just came out a week ago, and there's just under a \$20-billion deficit for the past year. That translates into around \$1,500 for every man, woman and child in the province of Ontario. This government has added another \$1,500 to the accumulated debt in the province of Ontario to every man, woman and child, and they're going to brag about giving \$50 back. We've still got a deficit there for every man, woman and child of \$1,450. I didn't hear him talk about anything to do with debt. He just seems to zero in on these little gains that make them happy, and they hope they'll get some kind of support in the next provincial election.

But I can tell you that nothing could be further from the truth. I think the public has caught on to this government. They've caught on to the smart meters this week. It's just a weekly barrage of mismanagement of this economy. And you know what? It might be an election ploy now, but I think next October 6 the citizens of the province of Ontario will reward this government and kick them out of office.

1000

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments? Seeing none, the honourable member for Northumberland–Quinte West has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I want to thank the three members who made some comments, and I want to talk a little bit about each one of them in the two minutes I have.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka talked about how the HST is costing families \$1,000 per person or whatever, \$1,000 more per year. He doesn't talk about the tax credits that those working people are getting back.

He leaves that out of the equation. He forgets that folks with low or no income get a PST tax credit of up to \$260 a year. He doesn't talk about that.

He talked about the rising insurance premiums. Some of us, including me sometimes, have very short memories. I remember that during their era in government for six years, insurance premiums went up over 40%. What did they do? They walked away from it. "Fend for yourself." And what did we do when we formed government? We reduced those premiums. They talk about insurance premiums going up in the last little while, or that are going to go up—in the very short time that they were the government, over 40%. He doesn't tell that.

Interjection.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: The member from Hamilton East answers my question, "Well, what would you offer?" His answer was, "A lot more." Wow. That really makes those parents feel much better. Man, that really satisfies people on the street.

Mr. Paul Miller: Seventy-five million dollars. Wowee.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: "Wowee," he says. I just heard him say, "\$75 million. Wowee."

The member from Simcoe North talked about the debt. Well, you know it's not only Ontario with a debt; it's the world with a debt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to join the debate on Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit.

Our critic from Parry Sound–Muskoka has done an outstanding job of conveying the position of our party on this piece of legislation, this tax credit for children, and also to point out the concerns we have about what is happening here—not so much about the tax credit itself, but certainly what has happened prior to the introduction of this tax credit and the environment that has been created in this province that at the end of the day really amounts to this being minimal tax relief for families after they have been so heavily burdened by the McGuinty government, who have ushered in in recent months—in fact, ever since they were elected in 2003—a long line of increases to family budgets.

This act provides for a children's activity tax credit. We've heard from the member for Northumberland–Quinte West that the great thing is that it's unusual but it's going to be retroactive to January 2010. Well, we know why this is unusual: The government is aware of the public anger out there, so they're hoping people will see this tax credit next spring and be impressed. However, based on what I'm hearing in my own constituency of Kitchener–Waterloo, people in the province of Ontario are very concerned about the hits to their pocketbook over and over again.

I would say to you, I support a tax credit. In fact, we're going to support this. I do think it's important that children have an opportunity to participate in physical activity, in music and drama, in whatever they have an

interest in doing. However, I think we also have to recognize that not everybody is going to get the \$50. It's going to depend on how much you have been able to afford to invest in your child. So the \$50 is a maximum, but if you have only been able to afford to invest \$100 in your child for these types of activities, I hope the public isn't fooled and thinks that they are going to get the \$50 tax credit, because they won't. I guess that is my only concern about this piece of legislation, the fact that not all families can afford to spend \$500.

We've heard now that school fees have been increasing and families are being asked to pay for more and more in the way of what should be considered a basic necessity at school. We're hearing they have to pay these activity fees to participate in athletics. They're having to pay for music. They're having to pay for some science materials. Families in this province can't afford all of these fees. They can't afford the increases that they're seeing on what used to be basic necessities in our schools.

They also cannot afford the HST, which this government introduced on July 1, which has really contributed to driving up the cost of enrolling their children in these activities—the government now is saying they recognize that it was a mistake. It probably is causing some hardship and so they've introduced this, in some respects as a public relations measure, to provide some minimal tax relief to families. But that's after the average family, now with the HST that was introduced on July 1, is going to be paying about \$1,000 more per year. So this is just a small initiative that is going to provide a little bit of relief. That's what we need to recognize.

This government, since 2003, when the Premier first said before the election, "I'm not going to raise your taxes," did raise our taxes. Families ended up having to pay the health fee. Well, I can tell you that that health premium has brought in about \$15 billion, but that money has come out of the pockets of hard-working families who actually believed the Premier in 2003 that he wasn't going to raise their taxes. Now they see a government and a Premier who have changed. The first thing that they witnessed was this health premium. So, again, we look at Bill 99, but this is minimal tax relief compared to what the public is seeing.

Then, of course, we've had the Green Energy Act that was introduced. It's very important to conserve energy. However, according to London Economics International, this Green Energy Act that the McGuinty government introduced is going to cost Ontario \$46 billion from 2010 to 2025. That is equivalent to \$631 per household per year. Look at all that money. This tax credit, Bill 99, is minimal in comparison to what Ontario families are going to have to pay. Then, they tried to sneakily introduce an eco tax on the same day as they introduced the HST initiative, on July 1. That was going to be on 9,000 products. But, again, they were caught, and the Premier has recognized that it was not managed well. They didn't really know what it was that they were doing, and so they've taken it back to the drawing board. But the public

knows that very shortly they are going to have to pay this eco fee, a new tax again. Bill 99 is minimal tax relief in comparison to the new eco fees and taxes that the public is going to have to pay.

1010

Let's take a look at auto insurance rates. They are increasing beyond belief. The new reforms are going to drive up the cost and yet give less in the way of protection to the average driver out there. So again, they're increasing, and we're going to see them increasing. We did, in 2009, by 8.8%. Again, a big increase for families, and when you look at Bill 99, you can see that it doesn't compensate for what families are seeing.

Then we've got our smart meters. What a fiasco they have been. Number one, some of the technology is faulty. Some of the readings are totally inaccurate. People are trying so hard to decrease the utilization of energy, but instead, these smart meters seem to be contributing to increasing family electricity prices and they are driving costs up. Plus, of course, the HST has now been added to electricity prices. That's driving up the cost of electricity. Then, of course, some of the new fees that I referred to—the Green Energy Act—contribute to higher electricity rates. So again, Bill 99 provides minimal relief to families compared to the huge increases they're seeing when it comes to these smart meters, which are causing energy prices to go up.

What else has happened? Well, we've had many fee increases that this government has introduced. We've seen a lot of government services increasing in recent years, such as driver testing. We're seeing increases in fines and penalties for seatbelts, speeding and driving offences. This government has introduced a lot of new costs to the public. Obviously I don't support people breaking the law—they definitely shouldn't do so—but I could say to you that there are a lot of new taxes and a lot of new fees that have been introduced by this government, and this is creating a lot of hardship for families in the province of Ontario.

Bill 99, although I support it and I support anything in order to ensure that our children are involved in activities that will increase their physical activity, because we're seeing an increasing rate of obesity in the province of Ontario, and tied into that obesity is also an increase in diabetes in children—so obviously, we need to be doing what we can in order to encourage and motivate children to become involved in physical activity. But we also have to recognize that not all families can afford the cost, so we have to look at other ways for that physical activity to be increased and new opportunities provided to our children.

I certainly support the involvement of our children in music, in dramatic arts, in dance—in fact, my daughter danced for many years—but I can tell you, when your children become involved in those activities, they're very expensive. There are all sorts of costs that are far beyond the \$500, and unfortunately, a lot of these activities are based on a family's ability to pay in the first place. I certainly support money that would be used so that students get some enrichment or some tutoring.

So I don't disagree with the basic premise of the bill: to help families. However, I would say that it really provides only minimal tax relief when you take a look at the additional tax initiatives that this government has introduced since 2003 when the Premier first said, "I won't raise your taxes." Let's just reiterate what he has done. We had the health tax, which really hit families hard. We've had the hydro increases, which we just have not seen the end of yet. Those tax grabs are going to continue. We've had the \$3-billion HST tax grab. We've had the attempt on the part of this government to introduce the secret eco tax. And most recently, families are seeing that the auto reforms that were introduced are really providing them with higher fees but less coverage. I also mentioned the fact that some of the basic school supplies that formerly were available to students—families are now being asked to pay for those as well.

You know what? Life under the Premier and this Liberal government has increased, particularly this past year. We're hearing about a lot of hardship from our constituents. I think, particularly in the last few months, they're seeing that it has become more and more difficult on a daily basis for them to make ends meet.

We just heard that the deficit is now about \$20 billion, and we know the debt is at a level beyond anything we've ever seen in this province. If you look at Bill 99, which provides some minimal tax relief, and you take a look at the debt and the deficit, we have to remember that that debt and that deficit are tomorrow's taxes for our children and our grandchildren. I think we need to get a handle on the out-of-control spending, the mismanagement, and we need to make sure that we look after the families in the province of Ontario.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte Kwinter: It's my pleasure to introduce the family of Emily Goldberg, the page from York Centre. In the members' gallery, we've got father Michael Goldberg, mother Heather Goldberg, grandmother Rene Katzman, grandfather Mel Katzman, grandmother Tillie Goldberg and grandfather Hy Goldberg. Let's give them a welcome.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'd like to welcome some of our guests this morning: Reverend Vincent Thompson, Jack Murphy, Paul Murphy, Pat Persaud, Yukon Persaud, Elaine Murphy and Frank Murphy. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to welcome and introduce a few people to the gallery today: Harold Wilson, president of the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce; Garry Clark and Susan Warren from the Ontario Prospectors Association; and Scott Jackson of the Ontario Forest

Industries Association. They are here, of course, over the atrocious Bill 191.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further introductions?

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome today, in the Speaker's gallery, Bette Jean Crews. Bette Jean is the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is for the Premier. Ontario farmers are facing unfair subsidized competition from abroad, they're facing rising costs of production, and they get hit by new, expensive government rules and regulations every time they turn around.

As you know, the International Plowing Match kicks off next week, and the Ontario PC caucus does not simply show up for the parade. We'll be there talking to farmers all week long.

But sadly, Premier, the priorities of Ontario farm families have been long neglected by the Premier and the McGuinty government. Premier, is it that you stopped understanding the priorities of farmers, that you never understood them in the first place, or do you just find farmers easy to ignore?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I very much look forward to attending the plowing match, as we have every single year. I expect there will be good representation from all the parties, and that's only right because the fact of the matter is that we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the people who live in rural Ontario, particularly our farmers, who work day in and day out to provide us with top-quality, affordable food—some of the most affordable food anywhere on the planet, right here. So I very much look forward to attending the plowing match, and we look forward to having an opportunity to talk to farmers there.

I know that one of the things that my honourable colleagues are going to want to speak to them about is their continuing support—the farm community's, that is—for the HST, because we have, in fact, reduced a number of their costs associated with the cost of farming, and I appreciate that support.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here is the difference between Premier McGuinty and the Ontario PCs: Ontario PCs believe in supply management for the commodities that have it and a business risk management program for the other commodities that do not. And, Premier, we would go beyond grains and oilseeds.

Quite frankly, Premier, it has been difficult to tell where you stand on it for simply grains and oilseeds. One day you're for it, then you're against it, then you're for it. You backtrack so often it is difficult to keep track.

Premier, I stand proudly behind farmers and also the MPP from Sarnia-Lambton, Bob Bailey, who has brought forward a private member's bill to offer farmers a tax credit for food bank donations. Instead of supporting Bob Bailey's good idea, you've played political games with his thoughtful and helpful initiative.

Premier, when it comes to Ontario farmers, when did you become so cynical?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I always appreciate the positive observations of my colleague, but let me just tell you about our reality. These are a number of provisions which we have put into place, none of which were supported by my colleague and his party opposite: There's our new Animal Health Act to better protect against outbreaks like swine flu and to keep our foods safe, there's our tax savings package of about \$25 million of savings for farmers, and there's our \$1.8-billion investment in farm income and stabilization programs—not supported them.

I want to remind you of the record of the Conservative government: They cut \$164 million from the Ministry of Agriculture's budget, they shut down 42 local offices and replaced them with a telephone recording, and they sat idly by as Ontario lost 1,000 farmers every year.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, I come from a riding where agriculture is the number one industry. I'm proud of that. Whether I'm in Binbrook or Fenwick or travelling across our province from Middlesex to Prince Edward county, I'm hearing from farmers across this province that the McGuinty government has simply lost touch with the realities of farmers across our province today. Even if the Premier ever truly understood the concerns of Ontario farm families, he doesn't even seem to try anymore.

In this year's budget speech, you used the words "Samsung" and "Korea" three times as many as you used the word "farmers"—three times more for Samsung and Korea than for Ontario farmers struggling in our province today.

Farm families want to earn a living growing food. The Ontario PCs will provide an environment to do so. Why won't the McGuinty government?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Members will please come to order. I found it difficult to hear the question.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm right beside him, and I couldn't hear.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not helpful, member from Renfrew.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs would like to speak to this.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I must say that I'm absolutely delighted to be able to speak to this.

The leader of the official opposition made mention that he comes from an agricultural riding. Well, that's what

my riding is about, and I can say to you that the members on this side of the House stand proud of our record. We have invested \$1.8 billion in income stabilization for our farmers.

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I will put that up against their record. Their record was nothing—absolutely nothing. So for the Leader of the Opposition to stand in this House and say today that he's on the side of farmers—my farmers—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

It's not helpful having honourable members egging them on. I certainly hope that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order.

I certainly hope that this enthusiasm that's demonstrated here in the chamber today, you bring that all to Elgin county next week as we open the plowing match.

New question?

SMART METERS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier about his smart meter tax machines: Premier, you have turned the concept of smart meters into tax machines that have become extraordinarily expensive for Ontario families. Measurement Canada says they're unreliable and giving false readings, and you yourself were forced to admit this week that smart meters are not actually conserving energy or saving families money as you promised. You appear to be backtracking once again and bringing in new rates of power on consumers.

Premier, I ask you: In face of all these shortcomings, in the face of your expensive experiment that is driving up the bills for Ontario families, why won't you pause this program and fix it so it supports families, helps us conserve energy and doesn't take another hit at the already tight pocketbooks of hard-working Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this very important issue again. My honourable colleague is saying essentially that we need to freeze electricity rates in the province of Ontario. That is not something that we are prepared to do. My honourable colleague and his party did that when they were in government, and they deprived our electricity system of essential investment so that it might be modernized.

We are now picking up where they left off. We've been making dramatic investments in the modernization of an electricity system which is now much more reliable, much cleaner and much stronger. There are some costs associated with that. I think we need to be honest about that. Those costs are going to be reflected in our electricity bills. What we need to do, working together, is do as much as we possibly can to control those costs and keep them down as much as we can. But the fact of the matter is, electricity rates in the province of Ontario will be going up.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the Ontario PCs have been clear. We are calling on you yet again today to freeze your smart meter tax machines that are attacking the pocketbooks of hard-working families across the province. You have admitted yourself that they are doing nothing to encourage conservation. The cost of the program is \$1 billion and counting. My proposal to freeze this program to get it right is not new. When similar complaints about consumer protection, bad measurements and confusion over smart meters arose in Victoria in Australia, they suspended installation to get it right and protect consumers and encourage conservation.

Premier, why won't you do the right thing? Follow the example from Australia and freeze your tax meter tax grab in place today.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm glad to see that my honourable colleague is looking to some other jurisdictions. I'd also recommend to him BC, Quebec, the US states, the UK, Italy, Sweden, New Zealand and Ireland. Here's a quote from Prime Minister Cameron's government in the UK: "The rollout of smart meters will play an important role in Great Britain's transition to a low-carbon economy," and it will "help us meet the long-term challenges we face in ensuring an affordable, secure and sustainable energy supply."

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There's an intelligent Conservative.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Here's the really good news: There are still some progressive Conservatives on this planet. Too bad they're not here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here's the problem, Premier: You have turned your smart meter initiative into an incredible mess. You've turned smart meters into nothing more than another Dalton McGuinty tax machine.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member of my speech from yesterday.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, quite frankly, families across this province are leaving the hydro bill on the table for days and days. They don't want to open that envelope to see what it reveals because hydro rates are spiking across the province. Families that have your smart machines installed are getting hit hard, no matter what they try to do to conserve energy, but the Premier wants to go headlong down this course, no matter its cost and no matter its impact on working families.

Premier, why won't you do the right thing? Fix this program before putting another tax machine into Ontario homes across the province.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Here's another great quote from today's Toronto Star, the editorial:

"Yes, hydro rates are going up for everyone, but that is not attributable to smart meters. Rather, rates are rising because the Liberal government is investing billions in new power plants and transmission lines after years of neglect under the preceding Conservative and NDP administrations...."

"Conservatives and New Democrats are both suggesting hydro rates should be frozen. The problem with this suggestion is that the money is still needed for investments in power plants and lines. If the money doesn't come from ratepayers, it will have to come from taxpayers (as it did in the last year of the Conservative government under Ernie Eves)."

We're going to continue to make these massive investments in generation and transmission. We will find ways, working with consumers—including through smart meters—to help them better manage their electricity bill.

SMART METERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. This government's smart meter scheme is making life more expensive for families, and hydro experts warn that the billing system isn't completely ready. Why, then, is the McGuinty government plowing forward, full steam ahead, with this wrong program?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Fiction is fun, but facts are helpful. I know that my colleague is making reference to the experience of Toronto Hydro ratepayers recently, so we thought we'd better take a look at some of the numbers, just to find out exactly what we're talking about.

There were six billing periods where they compared time-of-use rates using a smart meter with what the bill would have been had they not been using time-of-use rates and a smart meter. With the smart meter, in the first of the six billing periods, there was a 12-cents-per-month decrease. For the next billing period, there was an 88-cents-a-month increase; the next one, \$1.03 more; the next one, 96 cents a month more; the next one, 50 cents a month more; the next one, 20 cents a month more. On average, what we are talking about here is 61 cents more a month. That's what we're talking—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This summer, Hydro One warned Ontario's energy board that IBM's smart meter billing system simply isn't working properly. They said that the system sometimes produces incorrectly high estimates, resulting in incorrect bills that need to be fixed by hand.

"As additional customers are migrated to" time-of-use "pricing, the effort associated with these types of work-arounds increases, as does the potential for customer impact."

In other words, there's a real risk that customers can be over-billed. Isn't it time to slam the brakes on this scheme?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, with respect to the information that we have and the information that is being used by my honourable colleague, when you take a look at the actual cost of the new time-of-use rates, we're talking about 61 cents a month more, just so that we have that in some perspective.

I must observe as well that it is passing strange that the leader of the NDP, who is generally a champion of

the environment and of collective efforts to conserve electricity and to produce cleaner electricity, now stands against smart meters, when they've been received as an integral component of any intelligent strategy around the world to help ratepayers reduce their electricity usage and clean up our electricity system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Everyone knows quite clearly that the smart meter scheme is not working for Ontario consumers. That's the bottom line.

Now Hydro One is saying they have serious concerns that it's being rushed. I'll read from their letter again: "Hydro One believes that it is premature for the board to set mandatory" time-of-use "dates." Why is the government plowing ahead with this scheme when there are very, very serious concerns that Ontarians are going to be fleeced?

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The fact is, we've been rolling this out for six years now. I wouldn't describe that as a rush. We'll continue working with Hydro One. We'll continue working with our local distribution companies. We'll continue working with ratepayers, and we'll continue working with all Ontarians.

I'm absolutely convinced that among Ontarians there's a very strong consensus on a couple of fronts. One, we've got to continue to modernize our electricity system. We've got to continue to make the investments in new generation and new transmission. At the same time, we have to work together to ensure that homeowners, businesses, schools and hospitals can better manage their electricity bills. Smart meters are an important component of that self-management, so we're going to continue to move ahead with that and move with Ontarians when it comes to doing the right thing for our electricity system and our electricity bills.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier as well. Family budgets are being squeezed and the Premier won't say whether hydro rates will go up again, thanks to his not-so-smart-meter scheme.

Tracey Bissett from Brantford says that she takes care of a husband with mental illness and three children with physical disabilities and can't afford the \$300-a-month hydro bill. She writes, "I need to sleep in the night, not adjust my schedule to accommodate this stupid meter."

Why can't the Premier tell Ms. Bissett and her family that daytime rates are not going to go up?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As I mentioned a moment ago, using the data itself, on average electricity costs are going up 61 cents more a month when you use time-of-use rates and a smart meter.

I know, again, that there is consensus among Ontarians that we have to make that investment in a dilapidated electricity system. We have to expand our capacity at Niagara Falls. We have to harness more hydroelectric

capacity in northern Ontario. We have to put in place more gas-fired generation. We also believe it's very important to exploit exciting opportunities when it comes to green energy; that's harnessing energy from the wind and the sun. There is a very strong consensus in that regard.

I think there's also a profound understanding that making those kinds of investments costs money, and that will ultimately be reflected in our electricity bills. That's why we'll continue to work together to find ways to manage those bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Hundreds and hundreds of stories of hydro bill shocks are flooding my email box. Vernon Chiang writes this: "My summer bill ... is usually about \$244. Last month, it was a whopping \$408." Sandra King from Hamilton says that after her smart meter was installed, her hydro bill jumped \$200.

How can the Premier justify a program that has already cost more than \$1 billion, some \$1.5 billion, forces hydro bills through the roof and doesn't reduce people's energy costs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague maintains that she has a genuine interest in helping families with some of their costs, but when we put forward a personal income tax cut of \$200 per adult, they voted against that. When we put forward our transition benefit to help families, \$1,000, they voted against that. When we put forward our new sales tax credit of \$1,040 for a family of four, she voted against that. Our northern Ontario energy credit, up to \$200 per family and specifically related to energy—she voted against that.

On the one hand, my colleague stands up in the House and tells us she's very concerned about the impact of electricity costs on families, but every single time we give her and her colleagues an opportunity to vote in favour of an initiative that helps lower costs on the backs of families, she doesn't support that. So I'd ask her to look at herself when it comes to exactly where she stands when helping Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A budget that contains \$4.5 billion of corporate tax cuts is not my idea of a good thing, and that's why we voted against it, quite frankly.

Even those people who are taking measures to conserve energy cannot escape rising bills. Beverley Reid from Barrie says, "The bill I just got was \$121 higher ... I don't use my dishwasher and ... do all laundry late at night or on weekends. I even hang up my clothes and don't use the dryer."

Does the Premier agree that for more than \$1 billion, we could have invested perhaps in conservation and kept hydro rates affordable for people like Ms. Reid?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague says she's against a budget that cut taxes \$4.5 billion for businesses. What she failed to note is that they also cut taxes for Ontarians by \$12 billion.

I want to remind my honourable colleague that when they formed the government, they increased electricity

prices 40% in their one term. I want to remind her that they promised 1,800 megawatts of wind power by 2012 in their 2007 platform; by 2011 we will have 2,300 megawatts of wind power. They opposed our Samsung initiative that has brought on a \$7-billion private sector investment, creating 16,000 jobs.

The fact of the matter is, they don't have an energy plan. They're for conservation one day; they're against it another day. They're in favour of smart meters one day; they're against—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Premier. Bob Bailey, MPP for Sarnia-Lambton and proud member of the Ontario PC caucus, has a bill regarding a food bank donation tax credit for farmers up for debate this afternoon. The bill offers some relief through a tax credit when farmers donate unsold produce and food to their local food banks. I anticipate that the McGuinty Liberals will support the bill because they hastily assembled a non-binding resolution that calls for pretty much the same thing as our bill.

Premier, my question is: Why didn't you bring forward government legislation to help farm families with a food bank donation tax credit yourself, like the Ontario Federation of Agriculture requested in the pre-hearings for the last budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I really do appreciate speaking to this. One of the things—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. The minister has not even had a chance to answer, and you are already heckling her.

Minister?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that I wanted to speak about specifically was the work that has been done by this side of the House on the poverty reduction strategy—and the 25 in 5. There have been a number of motions that have come forward that look at a total strategy. This is one of the proposed tax credits for food donations that have been brought forward by Lou Rinaldi, the member from Northumberland; and the member from Sarnia-Lambton—and there are some fundamental differences.

I do want to thank the farmers, many of whom are donating food today—food processors and farmers who have entered into agreements with food banks. I sincerely want to thank them for all of their donations, and their recognition that local food makes a—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Back to the Premier: It's a hard time for farm families. While the Premier wants to talk about his HST and eco taxes, their priority is to

manage the loss of \$143 million in farm support. The problems with your smart meters won't help. Maybe the Premier doesn't know this, but livestock won't wait for time of use and farmers don't have the margin to afford your expensive and failing hydro experiments.

The choice facing Ontario's farm families is to decide who is listening to their priorities. The Ontario PC caucus will be at the plowing match for more than just the parade. We have put forward a tax credit for them.

If the McGuinty Liberals truly support farm families, will you agree here and now to pass all stages of Bob Bailey's bill immediately?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment, please. I'd remind the honourable member that my statement from yesterday did not just refer to the leaders of respective parties, but it was for all members of the House. The honourable member Bob Bailey represents the riding of Sarnia-Lambton, as does Lou Rinaldi represent the riding of Northumberland, and I remind—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's why I stopped the clock, and I'm going to offer some leniency as we get ourselves accustomed to using riding names.

Minister?

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Hon. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to respond again. One of the things that this side of the House has worked very hard on with the coalition is income stabilization for our farmers. I want to congratulate the work of the coalition.

We get that farmers are looking for programs that are bankable, predictable and stable. The tax credit is another part of that. More importantly, what we are working on and what we have provided is \$1.8 billion in income stabilization, and for the longer term, through the HST, the \$25 million in savings and the work that we are doing with the coalition.

We also cannot lose sight of the extension for the grains and oilseeds. This is a program that was designed by the commodity groups. We are committed to working with the commodity groups. We understand that the stabilization of the farm income—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. We have in the galleries members from various communities in the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and amongst them is their Grand Chief, Stan Beardy. He's asking me to ask you the following question:

"As the leader of Ontario, you promised a new relationship with Ontario's First Nations people.

"As the leader of Ontario, you promised last fall to the Nishnawbe Aski people that you would not pass the Far North planning act, Bill 191, unless it met with our consent.

"As leader of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, I am telling you that Bill 191 does not meet with our consent.

"As the leader of the Nishnawbe Aski people, I am asking you, the leader of Ontario: Will you keep your promises?"

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to receive the question. I know that there's a tremendous interest in Bill 191 and how to get everyone to find a way to develop the north and do it in a way that's in keeping with our desire to not only ensure that all northerners participate in that growth, including our aboriginal communities, but also in a way that respects our desire to preserve a natural environment for our children.

We've gone through a lengthy consultation process, we have worked very closely with our aboriginal communities, and we now find ourselves at a point where it's necessary for us to move forward. One of the assurances I do want to provide Grand Chief Stan Beardy and all our aboriginal communities is that we will, if requested, put in place an advisory committee comprised one half of representatives of our aboriginal communities so that they can, on an ongoing basis, have continuing influence as we shape this policy to ensure that we get it right.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Premier, nobody buys it. First Nations don't buy it, community leaders in northern Ontario don't buy it and chambers of commerce in northern Ontario don't buy it. But I bring you back to the question that Chief Beardy is asking you, and I'll read his question again:

"As the leader of Ontario, you promised a new relationship with Ontario's First Nations people.

"As the leader of Ontario, you promised last fall to the Nishnawbe Aski people that you would not pass the Far North planning act, Bill 191, unless it met with our consent.

"As leader of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, I am telling you that Bill 191 does not meet with our consent.

"As the leader of the Nishnawbe Aski people, I am asking you, the leader of Ontario: Will you keep your promises?"

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I very much appreciate the question. One of the references in the question itself had something to do with the state of the relationship between our government and our First Nation communities. I'm very proud of the work that we have done together to develop a collaborative relationship, a respectful relationship and a relationship that has resulted in measurable improvements. We have everything from a new ministry exclusively devoted to those concerns of our aboriginal community. We have a new gaming agreement. We have, coming out of the Ipperwash tragedy, a number of recommendations that were put forward, which we have adopted virtually in their entirety. And we have devoted all kinds of new resources in education and health care to enhance quality of life insofar as our aboriginal communities are concerned. We will continue to find a way through the Far North Act and Bill 191—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. My constituents have long been concerned about the issue of narcotics or prescription-based drugs being abused in their communities. They worry that everyday moms, dads and youth can easily fall into this addiction. These drugs are being abused throughout Ontario. Since 1991, oxycodone-containing medications rose by 900%. We have heard that a number of First Nations communities have declared a state of emergency over the abuse of prescription narcotics, particularly oxycodone-containing drugs, or the rising number of narcotic-related deaths.

My constituents would like to know what the government is doing to support the treatment of addictions and substance abuse.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for this question.

There is no question that the abuse of prescription narcotics such as OxyContin and Percocet is increasing in Ontario, and there is no question that the results are absolutely devastating. We simply must take action, and we must take it now.

When it comes to the treatment of addictions, we're currently funding approximately 150 programs across the province for the treatment of substance abuse and gambling. These programs include withdrawal management, community counselling, residential treatment and support services.

Since 2003, we have increased funding for the treatment of substance abuse by 65%. We're taking strong action to save lives and to improve health outcomes for Ontarians by curbing the abuse, addiction and diversion of these very powerful drugs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: My constituents will be pleased to hear that this government is working diligently to ensure that individuals who are addicted to drugs have the supports necessary to help them live productive lives. However, my constituents are concerned that not enough is being done to restrict the sale of these narcotics.

The minister mentioned that there is a growing abuse of prescription narcotics and controlled substances, including oxycodone, in this province. Not only is this costing Ontarians in their pocketbooks; it is costing them their lives.

Could the minister please tell this House what the government is doing to ensure that the growing abuse of prescription drugs comes to an end in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is an issue that is very important for all of us on all sides of the House. That's why yesterday I did respond to one of the recommendations from the all-party Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. I think all members of that com-

mittee heard first-hand the devastating impact of prescription drug abuse. Our Oakville MPP, Kevin Flynn, did a remarkable job of chairing that committee.

As part of our narcotics strategy, we are proposing that we would develop a database that will track the prescribers, the dispensers and the patients using prescription narcotics. By tracking the use, we would be able to identify the outliers: those physicians who are prescribing far more than they should, those pharmacists that are dispensing more than they—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you've had a really busy summer. Apart from catching your own caucus by surprise, you sold out our civil liberties with the G20 regulation allowing for arbitrary arrests. You sold out northerners and First Nations with your Far North Act. What do your civil liberties-destroying G20 regulation and your economy-destroying Far North Act have in common?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you very much for the question. Boy, what an interesting question. Although I won't speak to the specific cases that are resulting from the G20, I just want to say this: We have a very good record in the province of Ontario, and have for many, many years, of doing whatever we can do to find that perfect balance between respect for the rights of the individual and respect—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'll tell you what you're good at, Chris; it's taxing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I have been patient with the member from Renfrew for 35 minutes of question period, and I will have to warn the honourable member from Renfrew.

Please continue.

1110

Hon. Christopher Bentley: —and respect for the rights of the rest. In the middle of that, in the middle of that very difficult balance, are the police, and frankly, I think the police, day in and day out, demonstrate their commitment to public safety in the province of Ontario. I'll stand with the police and support the great work that they do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the Premier: With the G20 regulation, Premier McGuinty sold out Liberals who believed in the civil liberties section of Trudeau's charter. With the Far North Act, Premier McGuinty sold out Liberals who believed in the aboriginal rights guaranteed by Trudeau's baby. We always said that the Liberals would sell their own child if they had to; now they've shown it to be true.

Premier, what motivates you to backtrack on your principles, and which sections of the Canadian Charter of

Rights and Freedoms will your government abandon next?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We are the government that called the Dudley George inquiry. We're the government that's committed to implement the results of the Dudley George inquiry. We're the government of the new relationship. We're the government of making sure that we have a respectful approach to aboriginal peoples. We are the government that wants to see development in the Far North benefiting the people of the Far North, driven by the people of the Far North—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member knows that if one is dissatisfied with an answer, they have the ability to call for a late show.

Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I am happy to put the record that we have developed over the last seven years over the eight and a half years that preceded it any minute of the day. Line by line, any time, let's put them up.

PEST CONTROL

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Bedbugs are a growing health concern and a nuisance to thousands of Ontarians. For two whole years, Toronto Public Health has been seeking provincial funding to control bedbug outbreaks. Why is this government delaying funding and allowing the current bedbug outbreak to spread?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: It's a very important issue and we have to be very, very serious about this particular issue. We, as a government, and I'm sure all parties, want to do whatever we can to ensure that this problem is eradicated as quickly as possible. I am very proud of our member Mike Colle, who is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Thank you.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The member for Eglinton—Lawrence—your new protocol is an important one, so I apologize for mentioning him by name, but I think he has a great initiative. It is an initiative that we should pay very close attention to, and I look forward to seeing that private member's bill work its way through the system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Meanwhile, bedbugs are proliferating across Ontario and this government is doing nothing. Tenants in Toronto and all over Ontario continue to endure the problem of bedbugs.

One important way to control bedbugs is to stop landlords from renting infested units to unsuspecting tenants. Will the government support landlord licensing as a way of ensuring that landlords keep units bedbug-free?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I think the member knows full well that tenants have some rights. If they believe that those rights are being violated because the units aren't being maintained properly, they have recourse to the Landlord and Tenant Board. It is a very important board

that we set up and strengthened. So my advice to those tenants would certainly be, if you have those concerns, to lodge an appeal to the Landlord and Tenant Board.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is to the Minister of Education. A recent report released by Statistics Canada found that Ontario students are lagging behind the rest of the country with respect to graduation rates.

The Statistics Canada report showed that Ontario's upper secondary graduation rate is 74%. This ranks us eighth when compared to the 12 other provinces and territories in Canada, below the Canadian average of 77% and the OECD average of 81%.

Minister, we often speak of our increasing grad rates, but this report concerns me, my constituents and teachers in my community as it seems to cast a shadow on the success of our students.

Minister, does this report concern you, and how does it relate to the graduation rates that our government announced earlier in the year?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I very much appreciate the question from the honourable member. This government has been focused on student success since coming to office. We were very, very disturbed when we came to office, and only 68% of students in secondary schools were graduating at the time.

We have worked very hard with teachers. I know teachers have engaged students and their families to understand how we can better enable them to be more successful. As a result of the efforts of the folks in the classroom, and particularly the students—who understand why it is important that they graduate, that they need that secondary school diploma to go on and gain post-secondary training, whether at college or university or in an apprenticeship—our graduation rate is now 79%.

We will continue to press for more improvement for our kids. Our kids deserve that effort, and we are committed to that. Our kids have increased their performance in our classrooms.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Charles Sousa: Minister, we all know that graduation is a necessary step on the road to post-secondary studies and that the task of securing apprenticeships and good jobs is made easier with a high school diploma.

Our government has been very proud of the fact that graduation rates have increased since 2003, but there are still a number of students, some in certain cultural groups, who fail to graduate high school. These students may need an extra push or support to make it to graduation, but it's clear their graduation will benefit the students and, ultimately, the province.

Minister, what is your ministry doing to ensure that our students are getting the support they need to succeed, to graduate and to move on to further studies and the workplace?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Our government has been very focused on ensuring that students remain in school,

and that was why we brought in our Learning to 18 initiative.

We've worked with schools to ensure that they have the tools. They are now implementing the specialist high-skills majors program. This is a program that shows visitors to our country what is happening in our secondary schools, how it is enabling our young people to be successful.

We also have expanded co-operative education programs. We have dual credit programs where students are able to earn credits for high school credit and also for college credit, thereby incenting them to pursue a post-secondary career in college.

Since coming to government, we now have in the province 52,500 more students graduating from our schools. That's because of the focus of this government and our schools to support students so they can be successful and get that secondary school diploma—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Community Safety: On May 12, I put a question to the former Minister of Community Safety and asked him to stop the OSPCA's euthanasia plan at its Newmarket shelter. At that time, the minister claimed that he had no authority to intervene. In the hours following, 102 animals were unnecessarily killed, and Ontarians were appalled that the best the minister of the day could do was to claim he had no authority to intervene.

Since then, literally thousands of petitions have been signed in support of a resolution before this House that calls on the government to review the powers and authority of the OSPCA with a view to bringing it under the jurisdiction and authority of the provincial government.

I want to know from this minister: Does he believe that the Ontario government, that his ministry, should in fact have oversight of the OSPCA?

1120

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member would remember that our government has clamped down on animal abusers by updating and strengthening Ontario's animal welfare laws for the first time in an entire century. We've established the toughest rules in Canada, including jail and a potential lifetime ownership ban for those who mistreat animals.

We substantially revised and updated the OSPCA Act to provide for more stringent penalties for animal abuse.

As well, we have in fact taken the politics out of animal welfare in Ontario and placed the program in the hands of trained experts, where it belongs.

Our government has developed a system that is consistent with so many other jurisdictions in North America and around the world. We have confidence in our experts, who are trained and have been developed, and

we'll continue to work with our partners to continue to build on the skills of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The new Minister of Community Safety should inform himself of exactly how trained those people are. The reason the resolution is before the House is because the reality is that those agents of the OSPCA—who essentially have police authority; they have the authority to lay criminal charges—receive less training than security guards at malls in this province. It's a disgrace.

What is it that the minister needs to know that will convince him that the OSPCA is desperately in need of provincial oversight so that, in fact, the intent of that legislation can be carried out with responsibility? Will the new minister agree to consult with stakeholders to inform himself as to the need of provincial oversight for the OSPCA?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member made reference to a certain situation, and he knows that an independent review is being headed by Dr. Alan Meek, former dean of the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph, and retired Justice Patrick LeSage.

But while your leader is here today, I was glad that he was here when you asked this question, and that is because, consistently, the former government and members of the Conservative caucus have said that they do not want to increase bureaucracy. They do not want to expand expenditures into new areas.

In essence, what the member is proposing is that a new bureaucracy be set up in the province of Ontario at a great cost to the people of this province. I know that my friend from Niagara, who gets up and rails against the government any time he thinks this is happening, is not likely going to be in agreement with the implications of the proposal that you have made to this government.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question's to the Premier. Workers at ECP in Brantford have been walking the picket line since August 23, 2008. The factory was bought out four years ago by an American company that demanded major concessions from its workers. The company brought in scabs early on in the process of this dispute, which only prolonged the strike.

When will the McGuinty government bring fairness back to labour relations in this province and support anti-scab legislation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: This question gives me an opportunity to thank the member from Brant, who has been working so hard on behalf of his constituents on this matter.

Yes, it's always unfortunate when there is a labour dispute and it causes disruption in the lives of hard-working families, but the member for Brant is doing the right thing. He's reaching out to his constituents. He has come

to me on a number of occasions and explained the impact of the strike on the community. Like the member from Brant, our focus is always to work with the parties, to assist the parties, so they can get a collective agreement done.

Our mediator is in active discussions with the parties at this time. He's pushing them to come back to the table, and the ministry is keeping me informed of the progress that is happening.

On this side of the House, we respect the collective bargaining process, and our record speaks for itself. We've had the best record since stats have been—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier. Today, I'm going to actually join, once again—and I've done it several times already—the 84 striking workers at USW Local 1-500 on their picket line. These strikers have been walking the line for over two years, and not a single one of them has crossed that picket line.

But, you see, Premier, the company also has another plant in Langley, BC. At that plant a labour dispute was settled quickly. Why? Because that province has a law that tells the company, "Sorry, you can't bring in scabs, so you'd just better get yourselves back to the bargaining table and hammer out a collective agreement with your workers."

Why is our Premier here in Ontario siding with the company and telling them, "Scabs are okay"?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I reject that member's approach when it comes to labour relations. Our government understands that fair and stable labour relations are the cornerstone of Ontario's economic success.

I will not take advice from that member or that party when they ripped up hundreds of thousands of collective agreements for our teachers—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: On this side of the House, we honour existing contracts. We've seen what the NDP does to labour relations and—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East, your member asked the question. I would like her to be able to hear the answer.

Mr. Paul Miller: There is no answer.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This is the final warning for the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek as well.

New question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The Guelph poverty task force is always looking at ways of improving the lives of seniors, people with disabilities and those living on fixed

incomes. These concerns were only heightened by the global economic slowdown, which affected the lives of millions.

I'm happy to see the progress made on our poverty reduction strategy and our tax reform package, which has resulted in tax cuts for 93% of Ontarians. My constituents are thrilled that Ontario is funding new affordable housing for seniors at St. Joseph's in Guelph.

Can the minister please outline the steps our government is taking to make housing more affordable for those living on low and fixed incomes?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for the question and for being such a tireless advocate for affordable housing in her community and across Ontario.

There's no question that our government is committed to enhancing the lives of those who live on low or fixed incomes in the province of Ontario. The McGuinty government is the first government to be introducing a long-term affordable housing strategy. To date, we have already committed to building and repairing more than 76,000 affordable housing units across the province. In addition to this commitment, our government is also delivering more than 35,000 rent supplements to help make rent more affordable.

Although we, as a government, understand there is more to do, I am happy to say that our government is committed to getting it right and that we will continue to work with our partners.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to hear the progress our government is making on affordable housing. While it's unfortunate that past governments didn't see the importance of a long-term housing strategy, I'm relieved to hear that we are moving forward with one to help enhance the lives of those living on low and fixed incomes.

But I do have one more question about our government's commitment to affordable housing. Our latest budget outlines some very important goals, but I noticed that the minister's response didn't indicate new financial commitments for affordable housing in Ontario. Could the minister please outline what recent commitments our government has made to affordable housing?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I am pleased to inform the member that, even through the economic downturn, our government has remained committed to enhancing the lives of those living on low incomes. In 2009, our government entered into an agreement with the federal government to invest heavily in affordable housing. It will see an unprecedented \$1.2 billion invested over a two-year period. Over half the money has already flowed to our municipalities, and construction is going on all across Ontario for affordable housing.

Our commitment will see \$704 million invested in repairing social housing units to make them more energy-efficient and accessible. We will also invest \$540 million in affordable housing program extensions to create new affordable housing units for low-income seniors and the disabled.

We're about building units—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1130

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. On Tuesday afternoon, company officials of Abbott Laboratories in Brockville, which employs 157 people, confirmed that those workers will be thrown out of a job when the doors close in the fall of 2012. This plant manufactures nutritional formulas and is one of the oldest and most established companies in that community. Abbott employs 83,000 people around the world, and this plant represents its only formula manufacturing plant in Canada.

Will the minister please tell this House why, at a time when Ontarians should be seeing signs of economic recovery in the province, workers at Abbott Laboratories in Brockville are waiting for the doors to close?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Let me first say how difficult it is for all of us in this House to hear of Abbott closing their facility in that region over the course of the next two years. We're very concerned and, in fact, very surprised. This government has had a long-standing relationship with Abbott. We meet with Abbott executives, here in Canada as well as in Chicago, on a regular basis, so we were surprised that we were not aware that this may come, especially on the heels of significant investment that has been made in this particular facility.

We were on the phone yesterday when the news became public, and we are determined to reach the executives who have been making these decisions to see if there may be anything at all we could share with them that would help in this decision-making process—and hope that it perhaps isn't a final one.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Premier, you're from eastern Ontario—at least, you used to be. Can you lean over and tell the minister that she can do better?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You don't need to do that. You also need to be speaking through the Chair.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, through you, I'm told that one of the issues behind the closure of Abbott Laboratories is the inability of this facility to manufacture product in plastic containers. The shutdown announcement comes after the company recently put millions of dollars into environmental compliance issues.

Minister, there's a two-year window until this latest facility joins the list of shuttered plants in Leeds-Grenville. Will you join me, will you work with levels of government and make the commitment to those 157 Abbott workers in Brockville to work with the company and save those jobs? Will you do it today, Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm delighted to see that there is some kind of a reversal going on in that particular party.

Let me tell you this: For the first time in many years, this Ontario government has offered special program-

ming, especially for the pharmaceutical industry, for all kinds of industries that are working on high technologies, including companies like Abbott.

You, sir, through the Speaker, are a member who opposed every single measure that we brought forward in this House to assist companies to be more productive, to be more efficient, to adopt new, clean, green technologies in their facilities. So it is appalling to see that when there are many people who face the uncertainty of jobs in his own community, he would dare to come in this House and be political, while this government has moved forward to assist companies to be more productive—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TECHNOLOGY IN SCHOOLS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday the Premier said that cellphones and smart phones should be allowed in the classroom.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. Order.

Member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yesterday the Premier said that cellphones and smart phones should be allowed in the classroom. LOL, Premier. What was the Premier thinking?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I remind the honourable member about the use of props in the chamber. If I had my way, I would be banning BlackBerry's in this chamber.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's always delightful to receive a question from our resident thespian, who I know does so always with good humour and with a tremendous amount of goodwill. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this. Let me just be very clear with a few statements.

First of all, texting or the use of cellphones to socialize during class is a distraction and it does not belong in a classroom, period. Secondly, we trust teachers, boards and parents to make the right call when it comes to ever-changing technologies. If those technologies can help our students learn, that's a good thing. If they don't, if they're a distraction, then they should not be in the classroom. It's as simple as that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: OMG, Speaker. People are outraged by your comments. Here's what they're saying:

"Fancy gadgets don't develop literacy or mathematical skills. They're just more distraction in an already crazy world."

And: "I work in a college where students can't spell and can't work through a simple math question. If we were to allow phones etc. in class, instructors couldn't get through a lecture without multiple interruptions."

I know the Premier and I aren't BFFs, but will he retract his statement ASAP?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As I say, always entertaining. But you know, there was a time when slide rules were not permitted inside Ontario classrooms. There was a time when calculators were not permitted inside Ontario classrooms. There was a time, in fact, when laptops were not permitted inside Ontario classrooms.

I think the point I'm making is that technologies are ever-changing and we have a tremendous amount of faith in our parents, teachers, school boards and school administrators to make a call, when they determine that this technology might be of some benefit to students and to learning, to incorporate that as part of a lesson plan. If it's purely distraction, then of course those kinds of things should be kept outside the classroom, and that's where we stand on this.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LISA LaFLAMME

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate another outstanding member of the Kitchener–Waterloo community: Lisa LaFlamme. Lisa was named the successor to Lloyd Robertson as host of CTV National News in July of this year.

She started her career in her hometown of Kitchener at the CTV affiliate CKCO in 1988 as a copywriter and script assistant. One year later, she was promoted to radio news reporter, and by 1991, Lisa was on television, serving as a reporter and anchor for CKCO News. I remember well being interviewed by her on many occasions.

From that point forward, Lisa's career has been on a constant upward trajectory. More recently, as national affairs correspondent for CTV, she has travelled the world, courageously reporting from Iraq and Afghanistan, and she was embedded with the Canadian military on a 12-day hunt for the Taliban in the extremely dangerous Kandahar region.

Lisa has become a trailblazer for women in Canadian news broadcasting. She has received five Gemini nominations in the best news anchor category and been the recent recipient of an honorary doctor of laws degree from Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo. She was also awarded the distinguished Canadian award from the University of Ottawa.

On behalf of all Ontarians, I would like to congratulate Lisa and wish her all the best in her new role as host of CTV National News.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I would like to take a moment to recognize that next Tuesday is World Alz-

heimer's Day. This is an extraordinary burden that has been placed on many countries around the world, but let's just talk for a moment about Canada.

In fact, we have 500,000 people suffering with Alzheimer-related dementia disease. They anticipate that one in three baby boomers will have Alzheimer's. That's attributable, in the next number of years, to 1.1 million people in Canada with this disease, so you're going from \$15 billion to \$159 billion.

Ours is a system that deals with the curative, so once you are ill, we fix you. But I suggest that what we need to do, and what's planned by the Ontario Alzheimer Society in the bill that was presented, is to look at prevention and how we can delay the onset of Alzheimer's or, in fact, prevent it in those who may not get it at all simply by encouraging, for example, physical activity.

What an enormous difference it would make. Actually, it's estimated in total economic burden to be some \$452 billion, considering the caregivers and the challenges that our health care system is facing, not only with those with dementia but with those who are the caregivers for people living with dementia.

We do not have a dementia strategy in this province. The time has come for us to look at this burden that is being placed upon our community—our seniors in particular—and to deal with this in an open, concrete and transparent fashion, which is in fact to put together a comprehensive strategy for Alzheimer's-related dementia in this province. If we don't do this soon, then this burden will become a tsunami for us and we will be trying to play catch-up. So let's not just go to the curative. Yes, we need to deal with what we have, but let's do what we can to prevent, so that many more people can live without dementia and have a good quality of life, as many other Ontarians do.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: As you may know, today is Alzheimer Coffee Break day, a national program to raise funds for the Alzheimer Society. Alzheimer Coffee Break day, now in its 16th year, raised \$1.3 million last year alone. I would also like to take this opportunity to remind the members of this House that World Alzheimer's Day will be recognized next Tuesday.

As we all know, Alzheimer's is a debilitating disease of the brain which robs its victims of memory, clear thought processes, independence, and eventually their lives. According to the Alzheimer Society, a Canadian is newly diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease every five minutes, and this is expected to rise rapidly within the next 10 years.

Clearly, we need a multifaceted approach and strategy in Ontario to deal with the implications of this rapidly growing problem. We don't have a comprehensive strategy here in Ontario as yet, but recently, under the initiative of the member from Etobicoke Centre, who brought forward a private member's bill called the Alzheimer Advisory Council Act, which I was pleased to

co-sponsor, along with the member for Parkdale–High Park, we are hoping that we can move in that direction in Ontario.

We need to be supportive of all of those suffering from Alzheimer's in Ontario. I would particularly like to thank the Alzheimer Society of Ontario for their dedication in supporting those living with Alzheimer's, their families and their caregivers. The support that they give to all of these individuals is quite remarkable and we need to offer them our greatest gratitude and thanks.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I wanted to add my voice to those of my colleagues from Whitby–Oshawa and Etobicoke Centre. It's true, as you heard, that I was one of the co-sponsors of this bill. It's an incredibly important bill. We certainly need a strategy to deal with this coming epidemic. Certainly, we know it's coming. We know the breadth of it, we know the depth of it, we know the cost to individuals and to their families, so we need to act now. We can't wait. We can't afford to wait as a province.

I also want to acknowledge, along with my colleagues, the incredible work that's being done right now in our communities, both by those volunteers in a number of different facilities who are dealing with those who suffer from Alzheimer's, but also by the families. We know what an incredible toll this disease can take on families, usually, and very often on those who are just reaching retirement themselves, who look forward to a happy retirement and instead have to look after an aging parent who is suffering from this disease.

So before we get it—and when you hear those statistics of one in three and you look around this chamber and you know that there are many approaching their senior years here, or are already in them, you know that it's going to affect us. This is a disease that's not only about somebody else; this is a disease that's about us. So again, we call, all of us—it's an all-party effort here—on this government to do something, that they act now rather than later.

KERR STREET MINISTRIES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: In my riding of Oakville, the Kerr Street Ministries helps and gives hope to more than 5,000 citizens by providing holistic support and care through a number of community programs.

It's been a big year for the ministry. In May, they celebrated the grand opening of the long-awaited Dream Centre. It's a facility that was funded through generous contributions from many people in the Oakville community. It's got a gym, computer facilities, a youth lounge and a food bank.

This has also, though, been a year of considerable challenges. Recently, the food bank suffered a summer shortage and the cupboard was nearly bare. Once again, the community rallied, and within one week of the

shortage news coming out, groups like the May Court Club stepped forward and contributed generously to start restocking the shelves.

1310

I paid a recent visit to the Dream Centre. We hosted a community barbecue with support from Everdale Farms in Hillsburgh. The same day I was there, I had the opportunity to celebrate an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant that's going to help the food bank by allowing them to hire staff and purchase equipment to transport donated fresh produce. It will allow the ministry to grow their food bank services.

Today, I'd like to extend my sincere appreciation to Benjamin Ward, to Nathalie, and to all those involved with the Kerr Street Ministries who do incredible work to support some of Oakville's most vulnerable citizens in a time of their greatest need.

LEGION WEEK

Mr. John Yakabuski: September 19 marks the beginning of Legion Week here in Ontario. The Royal Canadian Legion is a non-profit organization assuming the responsibility of maintaining the tradition of remembrance of those who paid the supreme sacrifice by defending our great nation in past and present conflicts so that we, as Canadians, can live in the freedom that we enjoy today.

While the legion continues to support and represent our veterans, it is also an ever-present community organization that does so much to benefit our citizens. Legion members can be found anywhere that communities need help. In my capacity as member of provincial Parliament, I have seen it first-hand. My riding is home to nine branches, and as the son of a veteran, I am proud to be a member.

I'm honoured to have been asked to join members of branch 353 in Eganville this Sunday to kick off their celebrations. Branches in Pembroke, Renfrew, Arnprior, Eganville, Barry's Bay, Deep River, Petawawa, Cobden and Chalk River will all have special events this week. I would encourage all citizens to drop by, talk to the members and see what they've been doing and continue to do in your community, and I remind you that they need your support to continue their good work.

Ironically, after the kick-off at branch 353, I'll be holding a volunteer appreciation event myself. Where else but at the legion?

Our veterans, those who paid the ultimate sacrifice and those who are still with us, deserve our thanks and support. One way we can do that is to ensure that the Royal Canadian Legion continues to be a vital, vibrant and successful hub of our community. Congratulations and thank you, comrades all.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Kuldip Kular: In August this year, I had the privilege of throwing the switch at a new 10-megawatt solar generator installed on the rooftop of a business in

my riding of Bramalea–Gore–Malton. This green energy project was made possible by the micro feed-in-tariff program, which is helping to power Ontario's homes and businesses, creating new sources of income and growing green-collar jobs for the future.

The generator installed at Compact Mould by Icarus Power has created new revenue for the business as it feeds energy captured through its solar panels directly into Ontario's grid. Through these panels, the business will also be helping to offset the province's demand for energy during peak hours. It is supporting our commitment to phase out dirty coal-fired generators by 2014, making Ontario a greener, healthier place.

I want to thank Compact Mould and its partner, Icarus Power, for realizing the potential of the microFIT program and for bringing home its benefits to the residents of Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

EDUCATION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: A few days ago, our government was pleased to receive the 2009-10 report from the Education Quality and Accountability Office. As you know, our commitment to education in Ontario has been strong right from the start. We are very pleased to see tangible results from our commitment.

When we assumed office, our schools were suffering. There was a dire need to rebuild and revamp the education system, so we began doing just that. Our investment in the education system increased by 40%—\$6 billion more than the Harris-Hudak government. We have more teachers, more staff, more textbooks, more library books, smaller primary class sizes and innovative new programs to help engage students in education.

The results of the EQAO report show that we are on our way to achieving our goals. In 2002-03, only 54% of students were achieving at or above the provincial standard. Recent results indicate that this has risen to 68%.

We recognize that the test scores only indicate one measure of student success. However, we have also been helping students develop solid foundations in reading, writing and math. More students are getting the individual attention needed for success, and more students are graduating from high school.

These successes continue, and I'm pleased to say that our government will continue to work to help the education system improve and get better.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Bob Delaney: Yesterday, Ontario announced that nearly 700 people have returned to school pursuing careers as early childhood educators through Second Career during the past two years.

These future ECEs will help meet the growing demand as Ontario phases in full-day kindergarten over the next five years. The ECEs in a full-day kindergarten classroom work with our teachers to help the students learn, grow and play.

Additionally, ECEs are an instrumental part of the integrated before- and after-school programs that are offered as a part of full-day kindergarten at such schools as Plowman's Park in western Mississauga.

The Second Career program helps unemployed workers learn new skills and retrain for new challenging careers that are in high demand. The program helps with the cost of tuition, books, living expenses and other related academic expenses. Since June 2008, Second Career has helped almost 35,000 laid-off workers.

The implementation of full-day kindergarten helps create new jobs in Ontario, and Second Career helps fill those positions while helping Ontarians find new jobs.

This is just one more way our province helps Ontario families and creates new jobs and a better future for Ontarians today.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 191, An Act with respect to land use planning and protection in the Far North/ Projet de loi 191, Loi relative à l'aménagement et à la protection du Grand Nord.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1317 to 1322.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members, please take your seats.

All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mitchell, Carol
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Moridi, Reza
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Pendergast, Leeanna
Best, Margaret	Jeffrey, Linda	Phillips, Gerry
Broten, Laurel C.	Johnson, Rick	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldip	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Mangat, Amrit	Sorbara, Greg
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Sousa, Charles
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Wilkinson, John
Dickson, Joe	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David
Dombrowsky, Leona	Millroy, John	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine

Hampton, Howard
Hardeman, Ernie
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Munro, Julia

Prue, Michael
Sterling, Norman W.
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 41; the nays are 19.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 2, 2010, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ITALIAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE ITALIEN

Mr. Sergio moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to proclaim the month of June Italian Heritage Month / Projet de loi 103, Loi proclamant le mois de juin Mois du patrimoine italien.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Mario Sergio: The act proclaims the month of June as Italian Heritage Month. It means the province of Ontario recognizes the important contributions immigrants have made in building Ontario's communities and the economic, political, social and cultural achievements of Italian Canadians throughout the province.

Italian Heritage Month is an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about Ontario's rich history.

ACCESS TO PERSONAL HEALTH INFORMATION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'ACCÈS AUX RENSEIGNEMENTS PERSONNELS SUR LA SANTÉ

Mr. Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004 respecting access to personal health information, security of personal health information and informed consent / Projet de loi 104, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2004 sur la protection des renseignements personnels sur la santé en ce qui a trait à l'accès aux renseignements personnels sur la santé, à la

sécurité de tels renseignements et au consentement éclairé.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

Those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. David Caplan: The bill amends the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, to provide for the transfer of records from a health information custodian to a successor custodian or the individual to whom the information relates if the individual's relationship with the original information custodian is terminated.

The bill also ensures that no fees are charged for the collection, use or disclosure of personal health information.

The bill amends clause 18(1)(b) of the act to provide that consent of an individual for the collection, use or disclosure of personal health information by a health information custodian must be informed rather than knowledgeable.

It also establishes the requirement for electronic personal health information that is stored on a mobile device or disclosed electronically be stored or disclosed in a secure electronic format.

WORLD WATER DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA JOURNÉE MONDIALE DE L'EAU

Mr. Kular moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to proclaim World Water Day in Ontario / Projet de loi 105, Loi proclamant la Journée mondiale de l'eau en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Kuldip Kular: The bill proclaims March 22 in each year as World Water Day in recognition of the vital importance of water and the increasing demands on global water resources.

1330

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Gerretsen: I have a motion for which I believe there is unanimous consent, and that is to seek unanimous consent with respect to the time requirement relating to a private member's motion.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you. I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business. I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 35 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Frank Klees: I have literally thousands of signatures here relating to the Ontario SPCA. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ... recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until" 102 "animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring these powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm pleased to read this petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care

in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring these powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I agree with this and I'm going to give it to Brandon and affix my signature.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals"—before I go on with it, Mr. Speaker, it was presented to me by Thomas and Evelyn Pye from the great area of Drumbo in the riding of Oxford.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring these powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and

Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I will affix my signature to this petition as I wholeheartedly agree with it.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have a petition signed by a number of people from Wawakapewin First Nation, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario proposes to pass Bill 191, the Far North Act; it violates the treaties and disrespects our jurisdiction. It is not a true partnership. It imposes a massive, interconnected protected area over Nishnawbe-Aski Nation ... homelands without any compensation. If Bill 191 passes, we will not recognize it;

“Whereas we, the people of Nishnawbe Aski Nation, have not yet been consulted and accommodated;

“Whereas we, the people of Nishnawbe Aski Nation, have not given free prior and informed consent to Bill 191; all development and protection decisions within NAN territory require the free, prior and informed consent of the people;

“Whereas we, the people of Nishnawbe Aski Nation, will make the final land use decisions; Ontario has an obligation to honour and respect treaty number 9 and treaty number 5 and First Nations’ inherent jurisdiction. We will continue to work on local, community-driven land use planning initiatives based on our jurisdiction; and

“Whereas we call on all interested parties, including environmental organizations and industry, to withdraw their support for Bill 191;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To oppose third reading of Bill 191, the Far North Act, and call on Ontario to withdraw it;

“To engage in honourable consultation with the First Nations whose homelands and treaty and aboriginal rights are impacted by Bill 191; and

“To obtain the free, prior and informed consent of the First Nations whose homelands and treaty and aboriginal rights are impacted by Bill 191.”

As I indicated, this has been signed by a number of people of Wawakapewin First Nation, and I have affixed my signature to it as well.

RECYCLING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I’ve got a petition today from the students of grade 7 at Lisgar Middle School. It reads:

“Whereas the grade 7H students of Lisgar Middle School believe that the current method of recycling used dry cell batteries and other household hazardous waste materials is not successful. We have attempted to create the easiest and most comprehensive method of recycling batteries and other household hazardous materials.... This initiative fits directly into the same frame of reference as the blue box recycling and composting programs, which have encouraged individuals and households to recycle as much as they already do. We implore the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to give this proposed initiative of a household red box recycling program your approval into law;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We, the undersigned, would like to support, enthusiastically, the Recycling Raptors of grade 7H at Lisgar Middle School in their proposal of a household red box recycling program and implore the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass into law such a program, as described in the attached letter outlining the red box recycling initiative, as presented.”

I agree with this, and will sign my signature and send it down to you.

1340

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) is a registered charity and private police force autonomously enforcing federal, provincial and municipal animal laws under the provincial animal act without any type of provincial oversight or accountability mechanism in place; and

“Whereas, in 2006, resigned OSPCA director and treasurer Garnet Lasby stated, ‘Government, not the humane society, should be in charge of enforcing laws to protect animals and to prosecute offenders’; and

“Whereas, in 1989, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) formally requested the province remove police powers from the OSPCA; and

“Whereas, in 2006, the Ontario Farm Animal Council (OFAC) stated, ‘The number of questions and complaints from the farm community about specific cases and the current enforcement system continues to increase’; and

“Whereas the Animal Care Review Board, a tribunal staffed by volunteers, is the only OSPCA appeals mechanism available outside the court system; and

“Whereas the OSPCA recently received \$1.8 million from the province and is lobbying for additional long-term stable funding;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(1) That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to ensure that members of the Animal

Care Review Board tribunal are adequately trained in accepted provincial" livestock "practices and have some legal training to rule competently on issues brought before them; and

"(2) That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to investigate the resignation of 29 OSPCA directors (including the chair and the treasurer) who in May 2006 urged 'the province to step in and investigate "insane" abuse and animal cruelty charges'; and

"(3) That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to appoint an ombudsman to investigate allegations of abuses of police powers against the OSPCA."

I sign my name to this petition and give it to Alex.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have a petition from Muskrat Dam First Nation, and it reads as follows:

"Petition—protect our homelands:

"We oppose Bill 191 and call on Ontario to withdraw it. It violates the treaties and disrespects First Nations' jurisdiction. It is not a true partnership. It imposes a massive, interconnected protected area over the Nishnawbe Aski Nation homelands without any compensation;

"NAN communities will make the final land use decisions. Ontario has obligations to honour and respect treaty number 9 and treaty number 5 and First Nations' inherent jurisdiction. All development and protection decisions within NAN territory require free prior informed consent of NAN First Nations";

Further, "NAN First Nations will continue to work on local, community-driven land use planning initiatives based on NAN jurisdiction;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we call on all interested parties, including environmental organizations and industry, to withdraw their support for Bill 191. Bill 191 fails to uphold the Premier's promise of a new relationship with First Nations and new jobs and economic benefits" for the Far North;

"If Bill 191 passes, NAN will not recognize it. NAN will oppose Bill 191 by any means necessary."

I have signed the petition.

RECYCLING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It is sent by some of the grade 7H students at Lisgar Middle School. I'd especially like to thank Chris Kuzak of Saltmarsh Court and Helen Robertson of Mockingbird Lanes for the petition. While my colleague from Oakville read it, I will briefly excerpt it and then pass it to page Brigid to bring down. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the grade 7H students of Lisgar Middle School believe that the current method of recycling used dry cell batteries and other household hazardous" wastes

is "not successful. We have attempted to create the easiest and most comprehensive method of recycling batteries and other household hazardous materials.... This initiative fits ... the same frame of reference as the blue box recycling" program, which has "encouraged individuals and households to" continue to recycle;

"We, the undersigned ... support, enthusiastically, the Recycling Raptors of grade 7H at Lisgar Middle School in their proposal of a household red box recycling program, and" request "the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass into law such a program...."

I would like very much if page Brigid would carry it for me.

CONDOMINIUMS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: "Whereas the current Condominium Act, 1998 does not protect the rights of condominium residents and does not address the changing nature of condominium buildings, development, and communities in Ontario since 1998; and

"Whereas Bill 79 will offer better dispute resolution through the creation of a condominium review board which would assist condo owners in reviewing documentation and resolving disputes faster, more affordably and without going to court; and

"Whereas Bill 79 will introduce standard provisions for declarations to ensure transparency in the purchasing process, enabling prospective owners to read for themselves what they are signing; and

"Whereas Bill 79 will incorporate good-faith disclosure, forcing developers to pay for damages when they fail to disclose information; and

"Whereas Bill 79 will extend home warranty coverage under Tarion to conversion condos; and

"Whereas Bill 79 will mandate that half of Tarion's board be made up of consumer advocates that would set better timelines for conflict resolution; and...

"Whereas Bill 79 will force the updating of sound-proofing standards to better reflect the needs of condo dwellers;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support and pass Bill 79, the Condominium Owners Protection Act, 2010."

And Marchese signs this petition.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

AIDE AUX AGRICULTEURS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, in coordination with the Ministry of Revenue, assess the costs and benefits and work towards establishing an Ontario food producer and processor donation

tax credit which would allow for a non-refundable tax credit that could be provided to meat processors, dairy farmers and processors, farm gleanings sites, farmers' markets, fruit and vegetable farmers, and other producers and processors that donate Ontario products to food banks.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Rinaldi moves private member's notice of motion 46. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Before I begin, I want to take the opportunity to thank some folks for supporting my motion today—for example, folks like Lynda Kay, executive director, Northumberland United Way; Rob Bates, a resident of my riding; Bette Jean Crews from the OFA, who I believe was introduced this morning—I'm not sure if she's in the House right now—who is also a resident of my riding; and Anne Burnham from Burnham Family Farm Market.

I have resolutions from some municipalities, the municipalities of Brighton and Quinte West, and Cramahe township; Rob O'Neill, operations manager of Food 4 All Warehouse; and also support from the Ontario Association of Food Banks, to whom I want to give credit for the great report they produced to lobby government to move forward some initiative to allow fresh Ontario food—and, in my case, processed food as well—excess foods, to be distributed to food banks.

One would ask, why a resolution? I know later on today—I want to be up front—there is second reading of another member's private member's bill which I will be supporting as well. But why the resolution? I want to get that on the record right up front.

I believe the member from Sarnia-Lambton has a very interesting private member's bill that tries to address what my resolution is trying to address as well, but I think one needs to be specific about why I brought the resolution forward. The resolution is somewhat broader than the private member's bill. Although I'll be supporting it, this is much broader.

1350

The private member's bill is very restrictive. Once it's in place, to change it would be somewhat cumbersome. When we're dealing with volunteer organizations such as most food banks, where folks are going to donate some of their products for a small tax credit, you don't want to make it cumbersome.

So what my resolution proposes to do is to get the ministry—I named the Ministries of Revenue and Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, but I believe, through my discussions with the Ministry of Finance, they'll also be involved once this moves forward. The reason for that—there's no other jurisdiction in Canada that has such a program in place, so we'll really be breaking new ground. Through research we were able to ascertain that there are six jurisdictions, to the best of my knowledge, in the US—the states of Oregon, Colorado, North Carolina, Maryland and Virginia—that have something similar but catering more to their state. If we're going to

do this, we want to make sure that we bring the players around the table to make sure that we get it right.

Just another bit of contrast—like I say, and I'm going to repeat it again, I will be supporting the private member's bill—for example, that piece of legislation, if passed, has some very defined numbers. Are those numbers the right numbers? Should it be more? Should it be less? That's right in the legislation, and we know in this House how cumbersome that is to change.

What I would say to you is that this is sort of groundbreaking. I think, based on what the member from the opposition brought forward and what I'm bringing forward, we do have consensus in this place that we want to do the right thing. We just want to do the right thing.

I just want to add, I was privileged some three years ago now—roughly about three years ago, two and a half years ago—to be part of the poverty reduction team, to come up with a strategy, and now we have legislation in this province. This particular issue came forward a number of times as we discussed with different stakeholders, because sometimes when we're dealing with poverty—first of all, poverty has a number of different faces, but when we're dealing with poverty in large, it's not a matter of increasing the monthly paycheque. It's not a matter of helping them with rent. There are many fronts to the poverty cycle, to the poverty wheel, and this is one of the ways that we can support the poverty reduction strategy that one would have in place.

The other important thing that one needs to consider is that we know Ontario has some first-quality food that the farmers grow in this province; we know that. I represent rural communities, and I talk on a regular basis with some of my local farmers. We know from period to period, depending on world markets, depending on weather conditions, that sometimes their crops are not what they're supposed to be, or, for example, if they have a good crop of tomatoes—and I'm using tomatoes as an example—and the market is not there for whatever reason, I know farmers who have plowed those fields over because, frankly, it costs them more to harvest that crop. It's a lot easier to go with the tractor and plow that crop under.

The other piece that I would say is, that food is very healthy. We know that. In many cases, the people who are in need, who get that service from food banks, normally don't have a lot of access to nutritious food. Normally, fresh food, fresh produce, is the number one key to our well-being.

The other piece when it comes to the farming community, as I mentioned a minute ago, sometimes, through weather conditions, through market conditions, farmers have some challenges with certain sectors. If we had a mechanism in place where those farmers could at least recoup some of their costs—yes, they're not going to make a profit, and we're indebted to them for what they do, but at least it's something that would help them overcome that hardship.

We also know that sometimes we have—I know in my riding I have, and I'm sure in many other jurisdictions in

rural Ontario and even some urban centres, there are some fantastic food processors. In many cases, whether it's a scratched box or a broken case of the processed food, if we can accommodate those folks with a small token through a tax credit, I know for a fact that that will incent them to do even more.

I'd be remiss if I overlooked and did not thank some of the folks within my riding. Farming communities already give. I know that they give, because when I visit some of the food banks in my riding, they have the capability to handle fresh food. They already get some fresh food, and they do that out of the goodness of their heart. Thanks to them.

Processed foods: I know, for example, that in Cobourg we have Weetabix, the cereal manufacturer; they contribute an enormous amount of cereal to food banks. By the way, at Weetabix in Cobourg, the large majority of the grain to process their cereals in Cobourg, which are shipped worldwide, is Ontario grain.

I sense that we have a good understanding within this place that some initiatives such as these need to move forward, but I'd be remiss if I didn't stress the importance of getting it right. Can you imagine if we put out some kind of program, dealing with volunteers and folks who actually want to do good for the community and donate, if we make it too cumbersome, or it doesn't touch every part of what we're trying to accomplish? It would not be too successful.

In winding down what I'm trying to say and what we're trying to do today, I would encourage members to support this resolution. I would encourage members to work within those ministries, and I'm asking in a non-partisan way—this is private member's business—to make sure that we come out with a program, with a system, that is easy to manage, because once again, in many cases we're talking about volunteers.

There is infrastructure in place. I had the opportunity yesterday to meet with the Ontario Association of Food Banks, and they tell me that they're a good part of the way to being able to deliver the service once a program is in place.

I know that I've talked to Bette Jean Crews, the president of the OFA, on a number of occasions. As you know, both of those groups have been advocating in recent years—not just yesterday—that government look at some of these initiatives so that we can roll it out.

I think we do have some general consensus. Once again, I cannot stress enough the fact that we need to get this right. We're not copying any other jurisdiction in Canada because, frankly, there is no other jurisdiction in Canada that provides such a program or such an opportunity. This is win-win-win for everybody who gets involved. Once again, I encourage all members, from all sides, to support this resolution today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to rise today and support the resolution put forward by the member from Northumberland—Quinte West, calling for

an Ontario food producer and processor donation tax credit. In fact, what it does, as he has pointed out, is not simply move forward with it, but call on the government to investigate providing a tax credit which is sufficient to cover their costs to farmers and processors to donate their unsold produce and other excess food to local food banks.

I'm pleased because this bill was introduced after my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton introduced a bill, Bill 78, which is a food bank donation tax credit bill for farmers. It goes further than this bill in that it actually calls upon the government to pass a bill to not just review but to provide a tax credit to farmers who donate their unsold produce and other excess foods to local food banks which is sufficient to cover their costs.

1400

The reason why I hope we can pass this bill plus Bill 78, which was introduced by my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton, is because of the urgent need that we see today. Of course, it is also a request that was made of this government in 2009 by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. It was also included in their pre-budget proposal on January 26, 2010. What we need today is not more review and not more study, because I will refer to the fact that similar programs have been set up elsewhere. What we need is action. There is a desperate need for food.

I had the good fortune this Wednesday, September 15, to meet with the Ontario Association of Food Banks. They were here at Queen's Park. They support my colleague's bill, the bill by the member from Sarnia—Lambton, which would call on the government to provide the tax credit and not go through a lengthy review process. This is why they want it done. They talk about the difficulties in this province, where many households are struggling to put food on the table and they've had to turn to food banks for support. However, the food banks are also struggling because they've seen declining corporate food donations as many food manufacturers are closing their operations in the province of Ontario. They're saying there's urgency involved in creating a financial incentive for farmers.

What did they say? Why should this happen now, immediately, this tax credit to encourage Ontario's food producers to direct surplus food to food banks?

(1) Food bank usage is up 20% in the last year alone, an all-time high for the province.

(2) Food supplies are pressured as food manufacturing and large corporate food donations are declining. Many facilities have closed their doors, including CanGro in St. Davids and Exeter, Quaker, Campbell's etc. Food donation has dropped by one million pounds annually.

(3) A significant amount of consumable food grown in Ontario is disposed of or ploughed back into farmers' fields.

(4) A tax credit would support many local constituencies in need of assistance: local food banks, local farmers and low-income Ontarians.

(5) They tell us that there are many successful state models that provide financial support already. We can

take a look at them. There are 10 US states, for example, and another one considering it. And, of course,

(6) The problem today is that there is no financial benefit for farmers who do make food donations.

Who's going to benefit? I'll just summarize by saying what will happen if we have this tax credit and we move both of these bills forward today, but particularly Bill 78, which means we act now and don't wait for a review: (1) We could increase the supply of nutritious food to low-income families in Ontario; (2) we could reduce the level of agricultural surplus from Ontario farms; and (3) we could support local agriculture by reducing the losses for primary producers.

I encourage you today: Please pass the first bill that was introduced that is supported by the Ontario food bank association, and that is the next bill we're going to debate by the member from Sarnia-Lambton.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I want to state at the outset that New Democrats will be supporting this motion, although we have to state at the outset that the superior matter before this House today is the matter that follows this. The bill that follows is detailed. It's been well-thought-out. It doesn't ask for study. It already has the information. What can I say? We believe that this motion is weak but it does no harm. It's dilatory because it is seeking to have study that doesn't need to be done, although that amount of time, provided it's done before next March, really causes no real harm. Provided it's done and in the hands of the finance minister at the time of the next budget, it's not going to delay the process. Therefore, we reluctantly will agree to support this motion.

I say this because this motion comes before us in the absolutely strangest of circumstances. I go back 11 months ago, to this very House, this very room, with many of the same people being in the room on that day. On the 21st of October, I stood in this House and I asked this self-same question to the Minister of Finance. I remember it like it was yesterday. I'd just like to quote some of what was said that day on this very issue.

I asked the question. I quote here from the Hansard of October 21, 2009. It's under the title "Assistance to farmers."

"Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Finance. The Ontario Association of Food Banks and Ontario farmers need your help. Even while there are 140,000 children in our province who live in a home without enough food, there is an abundance of fresh, surplus, local food available at Ontario's farms that is ploughed back into the soil or sent out for disposal. Farmers and food banks are asking for a farm tax credit to offset their much-needed donations of fresh food to our poorest families. Minister, will you implement this tax credit in your next budget?"

That was the question, a pretty simple question. What happened after that was no answer at all. You've all been in the House and you've seen no answer at all to many questions. Well, this was one of the worst "no answer at

all" that I have ever witnessed in my nine-plus years in this House. It was a diatribe. It was a whole bunch of stuff: all manners of blame to me and to the NDP why this could not be done; all manners of blame going back to the original sin, as if, I guess, I was responsible for the sins of Adam and Eve, why this could not be done; all manners of blame about the difficulty of putting together a budget; and then, finally, no answer at all.

Of course, I went back to the Minister of Finance, because that wasn't very good. There was so much yelling and cheering on the Liberal side when the Minister of Finance spoke that the Speaker had to stand up and stop the clock because everybody was screaming and cheering what a good answer he just gave. Remember that, Mr. Rinaldi? You were cheering and screaming for him too. And then—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. Yes, I'd just remind that we refer to members by riding name or title.

Mr. Michael Prue: The honourable member was cheering too. And so I went back and asked the question again. I gave some more statistics and I asked the question: "The solution is very simple. Are you onboard or are you not onboard? Will this government commit today to implement a tax credit for farmers and food banks so that people can have decent and nutritious food?" Again, I got the same kind of diatribe. I got the same kind of diatribe, saying how bad the NDP was and how we didn't vote for a budget seven years ago and all the stuff that you hear here every day. And of course, I was very frustrated, and I was especially frustrated when all of the government bench erupted in cheers again, because he wasn't answering the question and because, I guess, government members liked that.

I was a little disheartened, but not too disheartened, because the next day I had an opportunity to ask another question on the same issue, and by the strangest, best part of luck, the finance minister was unfortunately not available during that portion of question period, so I got to ask the Premier the same question. I'd like to quote from that too, because that was also exciting. The next day, October 22, 2009, I stood up and asked—and I'm quoting again from Hansard:

1410

"Assistance to farmers

"Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday I asked the Minister of Finance whether the government would consider implementing a tax credit for farmers who donate surplus crops to food banks. For every dollar that the tax credit costs, \$7 of fresh food will make it on to the tables of low-income families—140,000 children. That's an excellent return on investment.

"In his answer yesterday, the Minister of Finance chose to attack me and the NDP rather than comment on this innovative idea. So I am asking the question again, this time to the Premier: Will the government implement a food producer donation tax credit?"

And you could have knocked me down with a feather, because this was the answer that came back from the Honourable Dalton McGuinty:

"Let me just make public the private conversation that the Minister of Finance and I had subsequent to the question being put forward to the minister. We both thought that there may be something to this. The Minister of Finance has in fact undertaken to consider this. It was the first time he had been apprised of this particular possibility.

"I'll tell you why I am personally drawn to it—and I'm not making any commitments—because some time ago, I had the privilege of putting forward a private member's bill, a good Samaritan bill, that enabled people in the fast food industry and our grocery stores to make contributions of food, which would otherwise go into the garbage, to our needy. That worked, and it worked well. As I said to the Minister of Finance—he's undertaken to take a serious look at this, just so you know."

This was 11 months ago. Well, you could have knocked me down with a feather. But I did ask him and I did make the following statement after I said some more things. I thanked the Premier for having a change of heart, and I looked forward to him saying a good deal more in the future in support of this good idea, to which he responded, and I think this needs to be part of the record:

"As I said, I don't want to exaggerate; neither do I want to diminish the commitment. We are going to take a serious look at this. I'm drawn to it. I like the sound of it. Obviously there is a cost to it, and we need to take a look at that as well."

Then he goes on to say that he'll give it very serious consideration.

I say this by way of background. The Minister of Finance pooh-poohed the idea and got cheers from every single person on the government side. When the Premier spoke the next day, he got an equally lusty cheer from every member on the other side, even though he gave a diametrically opposed answer. He got just as many cheers—in fact, I think even a few more cheers—for having said it. And he promised that there was going to be some work done on this. Well, we waited for the work to be done.

I was on the finance committee, as was the honourable member who is presenting this, and he knows, and I know, that this was brought up when we toured the province last winter, January and February. He knows there were people from the food banks advocating this idea. There were people from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture again advocating this idea. And the government members know only too well that there were motions put forward to the Ministry of Finance to implement this.

What happened to all of that—the commitment of the Premier, the commitment of the finance committee, the commitment of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the good works being done by the food banks? Absolutely nothing.

Now we're being asked, 11 months later, to study it. That's what this motion says: "Let's go out and study it now." Surely to God the ministry had the wherewithal and the commitment of the Premier to study it for the last

11 months. Why are we starting now? I have to ask that question. Was there nobody over there on that side advocating? Even though there were five members of the finance committee, not one person was advocating this, not one person put it forward in caucus? I have to ask that question. You'll have some rebuttal. Please answer that, because this should not be here today. This should already have been done. And I question: Why was nothing done? If something had been done, there would not be this motion here today.

I also have to question how it ended up here on the order paper today, because this is a really interesting thing. Mr. Bailey, some weeks ago—excuse me, the member from Sarnia-Lambton; the bill is standing in the name of Mr. Bailey here today—put in his notice and said what he was going to bring forward. He is required to do that in plenty of time, and he did that, and everybody knew his bill was coming up next.

In a very rare and strange occurrence, we had a shifting of time frames and we had members changing time frames. We all voted unanimously because we had no idea what the honourable member was going to be bringing forward. In fact, at the time, when the order of precedence was made, it was to be determined. That's what it said: "to be determined."

So I have to tell you, I was shocked. This is the first time in the nine years that I have been here that I have a seen a "to be determined" bill, which has been changed to accommodate a member or members, actually being used to usurp what was there by another member. I can't say that there was any other reason. This is not coincidental. This cannot be said to be coincidental, where the time frame has been changed so that this came first.

I do have to say that all of the studies have been done. The Ontario Association of Food Banks has shown how much it will cost each and every year—this year, through 2014, when it maxes out at \$4.5 million. We already know what it's going to cost. I don't know what the study is going to do. As I said at the beginning, if it doesn't cause any harm, if it's done before March, I'm not going to stand in its way. But this is a very bizarre occurrence this date.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I want to first congratulate my colleague the member for Northumberland-Quinte West for having introduced this resolution. Oui, nous avons un député qui, vraiment, a toujours appuyé et a toujours été solidaire de nos agriculteurs et du secteur rural de l'Ontario.

Today, as my colleague from the NDP just said, it's the first time for myself too that I see two similar—one resolution and a bill for just about the same issue, but they differ one to the next, because this resolution will not only cover the tax credit to the farmers; it will also honour a tax credit for the suppliers that are giving food to the food banks.

In my area alone, I have 17 food banks spread from Hawkesbury to Alexandria, Riceville, Rockland and Alfred. There are 17 of them, and four farmers' markets.

But let me tell you that I have to congratulate my colleague from Northumberland–Quinte West. This gentleman has been focusing on the agricultural sector ever since he got elected, and as part of that, at the municipal level, he was taking care of the farmers.

We eastern Ontario residents have to say thank you to this gentleman because he is the one, really, who has pushed for the EODF, the eastern Ontario development fund, which has been a real success working with the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus. The mayor of Petawawa, Bob Sweet, was the caucus warden at the time for the country of Renfrew. Let me tell you, he succeeded and confirmed that this would be a great help for the development of eastern Ontario.

Food banks and farmers' markets play a very important role in our community.

I'm looking at the present time, talking just before I came here to one of the head people of a food bank. I had to explain to him what was going to happen in this resolution. A tax credit and an income tax receipt are not the same at all. I'm looking at this here, the benefits: The benefit would "provide an incentive for producers and processors to donate with a net financial benefit for the donation of surplus food product from Ontario. At present, an individual or corporation may receive a charitable tax receipt for their food donation, but they will receive no net financial benefit for their donation." That is the big difference between a tax receipt and a tax credit. This is why this resolution is very, very important.

1420

I'm looking just in my area, and some of the places that come to my mind—National Grocers is supplying a lot of food to the food bank. At the present time, some of them are taking tax receipts. It's not a tax credit. I can guarantee that we will see more people in Ontario benefiting from this resolution or from the bill that we'll be debating after this resolution. I have independent grocers, Loblaws, Steinberg, Price Chopper—there are quite a few.

Again, I want to congratulate my colleague for having the initiative to come up with this bill today.

Lorsque nous parlons des marchés alimentaires et des producteurs, actuellement nous connaissons dans l'Est ontarien et dans le sud de l'Ontario plusieurs marchés de producteurs agroalimentaires qui font partie de la communauté. Vraiment, la nourriture souvent leur est donnée par des magasins de « grocery »—magasins d'alimentation.

Aujourd'hui nous voyons, avec cette résolution, que nous pourrions bénéficier davantage. J'attends aussi la discussion avec mon ami de Sarnia–Lambton; on va avoir une bonne discussion sur ce projet de loi. Je crois que, encore une fois, le Parti libéral de l'Ontario appuie fortement les agriculteurs, et avec cette résolution ça va leur démontrer que nous sommes avec les producteurs de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the resolution providing for tax credits for farmers who donate excess produce or other food to Ontario's food banks.

Today, as you know, we have an unusual situation: a resolution followed by a private member's bill on exactly the same topic. I will be supporting both, and I want to thank the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for bringing forward a resolution that supports the bill introduced by my good friend from Sarnia–Lambton. Clearly, it's a good idea if we are debating it twice and it's brought forward by two different members.

Every year, there are farmers who grow food they can't sell. They would rather have the food eaten than have their hard work and all the good food go to waste, but the reality is that there's a cost to harvesting food and getting it to the food bank. Whether it's labour, equipment or transportation costs, under the current system there are times when farmers simply can't afford the cost of getting the food from the field. Many times, I've seen boxes of cabbages, boxes of apples that were disposed of on the farm because the costs of getting them go to the market were more than the market would pay for that product. Something needs to be done. The idea of providing a tax credit that would compensate farmers adequately to cover those costs and allow them to share that good Ontario food with people in need is simply smart, and it will work.

I'm going to speak a little more to the substance of the idea later, but right now I want to focus on the difference between the resolution and the bill, because frankly I think it's a good example of the difference in approaches of our two parties.

The idea of a tax credit for farmers who donate food to the food bank isn't new. In fact, almost a year ago, the McGuinty government was asked during question period if they would implement it, and they did nothing. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture asked for this tax credit in their submission to last year's budget. Once again, the McGuinty government took no action to help farmers or support the food bank. Now, almost a year later, conveniently, right before they face farmers at the International Plowing Match, the McGuinty government is trying a public relations stunt with this resolution.

This is a non-binding resolution, and it doesn't even call for the implementation of the tax credit. It just asks the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Minister of Revenue to "assess the costs and benefits" of establishing such a tax credit. Compare it to the Conservative approach: The member from Sarnia–Lambton believes that this tax credit will help farmers and food banks, so he researched the technical details on how to implement it, met with the stakeholders to hear what would work best for both farmers and food banks, and then introduced a bill on May 19, almost four months ago. This morning, I asked the Premier if he would take action to give this bill second and third readings today, and still the Liberals have done nothing.

Unfortunately, farmers have come to expect this type of stalling and lack of action from the Liberal govern-

ment. We have seen it most recently in the business risk management program that farmers have been asking for. Bee farmers, pork producers and fruit and vegetable growers in Ontario are all in trouble. Over the last few years, they have been hit with a number of factors at the same time—low commodity prices, high input costs, a high Canadian dollar, cruel legislation and H1N1—and the support programs that are supposed to help them simply aren't working.

They came to the McGuinty government and asked for help. The government told them to work together and come back united on what they needed. Our farm organizations did just that. They formed the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition to speak with one voice, as requested, and the government did the same thing: nothing. The government told them to consult and talk to their grassroots. They did that, and the government has done nothing.

Now, after all that work, the government claims they can't do anything until the federal government joins them. Yet just six weeks ago, they extended exactly the same program for the grain farmers with no federal contribution. Why would the government believe that programs work for grain and oilseeds but not for hog farmers or bee farmers or fruit and vegetable growers?

I don't want to be cynical, but is it possible that the Minister of Agriculture knew that the federal government wasn't going to support this type of program? Is it possible that it was just one more example of delaying and empty words from the McGuinty Liberals? Unfortunately, while I appreciate the subject of the resolution, it seems that what we are debating today is more empty words from the Liberal government.

If the McGuinty government had concerns about the technical aspects of the bill introduced by the member from Sarnia-Lambton, they could have debated it and then made amendments in committee. They could have introduced their own government bill to implement the tax credit. Instead, they chose to use this time to bring forward a resolution that is more about public relations than accomplishing anything for the food banks or the farmers. If there are more organizations that should be included in the bill to make it even more effective, I'm sure that the member from Sarnia-Lambton would welcome that change.

I commend the Liberals for recognizing a good idea when the member from Sarnia-Lambton brought it forward, and I look forward to debating the bill and taking action on this decision very shortly.

I don't want to make it sound like I don't appreciate that the Liberals have given us forewarning that they are going to support the member from Sarnia-Lambton's bill, but I do think it's a rather cynical approach to all of a sudden rush in with this resolution today that has absolutely no impact except that, when we get through today and pass both the resolution and the bill, the Liberals can stand up and say, "Look what we did," when in fact, as I mentioned in that whole list of things, each time it was their turn to do something, what they did was nothing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm more than pleased to join this debate.

Both the motion and the bill are laudable. The difference with the motion that comes from my colleague from Northumberland-Quinte West is that it actually includes the food processors. I think that's a plus, not a minus. And while we can stand here and pontificate about all the political whatevers, I'd like to refocus on why this bill is such a good idea and say thank you to the farmers who have in the past given very freely. They may have received a tax credit or a tax receipt, but they have given very freely.

I'll use as an example the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board. We feed about 90,000 children every year in this city alone, and so dependence on the food bank is significant, and also on all of these suppliers. The opportunity to provide the children with fresh fruit and milk, for example, is something we should be very concerned about, because it will make a significant difference in how they move forward in terms of being healthy. In fact, if every child in the school boards virtually across this province were to receive eight ounces of milk a day, it would actually contribute to all their nutritional needs that they have in one day—eight ounces of milk—and yet we haven't been able to do that.

1430

We had a very interesting story that occurred with some children in a particular school who, when we sent fresh fruit to them, actually sent the fruit back. This is a very needy school with children who are at risk. We actually did supply a significant number of lunches, dinners or both, and breakfasts, but this fruit kept coming back. Finally, we took the fruit back to the school and said, "This is fresh fruit," and the answer was that the children had never seen an apple; they didn't know how to eat an apple.

So look at the opportunity we have if we can, in fact, reach out to these children, change their dietary habits and encourage them to eat healthy as opposed to eating the junk. It has a huge effect on their ability to learn. It's hard to teach a hungry child. It certainly improves their health in terms of risk for diabetes and other diseases that are childhood diseases. It also takes that message home into the family that a piece of fresh fruit is far better than a bag of potato chips or whatever in terms of a snack.

Here we have, through a very laudable bill and a very great motion, an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children, which is really what we're all about, and their families. Together we can do it. I think this is where we should be focusing our attention, and not focusing on the political rhetoric, because at the end of the day it's a win for the government, it's a win for the farmers, it's a win for the processors, but it really and truly is a win for the children and a win for their families. We all benefit from that by working together.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Johnson: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak in support of this resolution.

Over the years, I've been quite involved with the Kawartha Lakes Food Source in my area, and I know that in many instances—as they are a registered charity, people can donate money to the organization; many people donate food. But they do it out of the goodness of their heart and out of the excesses that they've had. These organizations struggle at many times to get enough food. There are always the food drives that occur around Christmastime, when everybody is in that generous spirit of giving. It's easy to generate food and raise money at that time of the year, but there are other times of the year when it's difficult. Children and families have needs that go on throughout the year. My wife and I were involved in a number of projects to assist with raising the profile of the food bank and the Kawartha Lakes Food Source during June and July, when the needs are still there but often people forget that children are hungry in the summertime too.

This resolution will provide food processors, producers, farmers, another way to assist and provide an incentive for them to assist in supporting the local food banks through the tax credit. A lot of times now you talk to people who have disposed of food at the end of the day because they can't get rid of it, whether it's farmers' markets or processors. I was talking to a processor in my area who deals with goat cheese, goat product and goat whey, and at the end of the day they're trying to find ways to get rid of it, but they end up just disposing of it instead of putting it in a place where it can make a difference.

I think what is different about this resolution is that it says, "Let's work towards having the Ministry of Revenue and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs work towards finding a solution that will work, directing them to get that job done." As opposed to saying, "You must," it says, "Let's find a way to make this work." I think that's a more proactive way of doing it. It will help farmers and food processors. Hopefully, instead of disposing of food at the end of the day, if there's an incentive to receive a tax credit, this will be good for them—anything that will help the farmers today, because I think the farmers are in need.

In my time at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, I had the opportunity to visit many farms and speak to the farmers. I think this will be very well received. I know it will be well received by the food banks, and it will provide another source of support for farmers and food manufacturers. I am very much in support of this resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Northumberland—Quinte West has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I want to thank all the members who took the time and did the research to speak to my resolution today. I think it's fantastic.

I guess I must say up front that I'm somewhat disappointed in the fact—not about the resolution and not

about the private member's bill that's coming next; I think my good friend from Etobicoke Centre alluded to it a little bit, but I want to emphasize it—that we have a good thing here today that we're trying to debate, trying to do, and folks from both the official opposition and the third party wanted to make this into a political situation while we really want to try to help people.

I think I said from the outset that I'm prepared to support, and will support, the private member's bill. It is different. My resolution is different. I believe, and I made it very, very clear at the outset, that the private member's bill is very prescriptive. I think we need to do more. I think we have to do more research. I think we need to get all those folks around the table. That's the big difference. So to take that, when we're both talking about the same thing, and turn it into a political hot potato is very, very—how can I put it? It's not quite the appropriate way to do it in this House. When we talk about private members' business, it's not about politics; it's supposed to be about what we believe is for the good of our ridings or in our province. So I'm disappointed in that part of it, but I look forward—

Interjections.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: That just proves how important this is to them. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): That concludes the time allotted for this private member's ballot item. We'll vote on this ballot item in about 100 minutes.

TAXATION AMENDMENT ACT (FOOD BANK DONATION TAX CREDIT FOR FARMERS), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES IMPÔTS (CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT AUX AGRICULTEURS POUR DON À UNE BANQUE ALIMENTAIRE)

Mr. Bailey moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 78, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide a tax credit to farmers for donating to Ontario food banks certain agricultural products they produced /
Projet de loi 78, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour prévoir un crédit d'impôt pour les agriculteurs qui font don de certains produits agricoles qu'ils produisent à des banques alimentaires de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member, pursuant to standing order 98, has up to 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Before I begin, I would like to welcome the following people to the Legislative Assembly today, all of whom have been instrumental in bringing Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010 to fruition or for lending their support to our efforts.

I would like at this time to welcome—and I will just name them here and they can stand or wave; they are in the Speaker's gallery: Ed Borkowski, Judy Dancause,

Todd Jaques, Nicola Cernik and Basil Alexander, all from the Ontario Association of Food Banks; Bette Jean Crews from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture; Captain Brenda Murray from the Salvation Army of Canada; Jamie Reaume from the Holland Marsh Growers' Association; Brenda LeClair from the Chatham-Kent Outreach for Hunger centre; Larry Brigham from the Regional Food Distribution Association in Thunder Bay; and Myles Vanni, who first brought this issue to my attention a year ago, from my riding, from the Inn of the Good Shepherd in Sarnia. I would like to welcome them to the Legislature today.

Mr. Speaker, over the last two years, we Ontarians have found ourselves in the midst of a very difficult period as economic growth stagnated and unemployment increased rapidly across the country. While many of us weathered this storm by limiting our spending on the non-essentials, the unfortunate reality is that many households across Ontario have struggled, and continue to struggle to this day, to put food on their families' tables. In turn, many families have been forced to look to their local food bank for assistance.

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In May 2010, I introduced a bill to this assembly entitled the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), that, if passed, would provide a significant tax credit to farmers who donate their unsold produce and other excess food. While it might not solve the entire problem, I think it's a common sense solution to a clear need in my community and many communities across Ontario.

I am proposing a simple change that will go a long way to relieve hunger and eliminate waste in our province. Inspired by similar programs in 10 US states, my proposed legislation calls upon the government of Ontario to institute a non-refundable tax credit worth 25% of the wholesale value of donated agricultural products to farmers who choose to donate their excess produce. This bill would also permit those unused tax credits to be carried forward and deducted for up to a five-year period.

The extent of this need was driven home to me last March while I volunteered with Myles Vanni's food bank to serve meals at the Inn of the Good Shepherd in Sarnia. With my own eyes, I saw the need in my community for the role that food banks and soup kitchens provide. Through local churches and other non-profit organizations, these groups provide much-needed front-line help to many individuals and families who are in need through no fault of their own.

The unfortunate fact is that the Ontario Association of Food Banks reports that food bank usage in Ontario has increased by 20% in the last year alone. This means that roughly 375,000 Ontarians, our friend and neighbours, were forced to turn to their local food bank every month in 2009. This is an all-time high for this province, yet perhaps more heart-wrenching than this figure is the fact that roughly 40% of those numbers are children who have to turn to food banks for help.

Unfortunately, as demand has increased, food banks across the province have seen a decrease in donations

from large manufacturers and corporate food donors. In fact, food donations have decreased by more than one million pounds in 2008 alone due to major food processors and food manufacturing plants in communities across the province closing their doors. Most notably, the recession brought about the closure of the Campbell's processing facility in Listowel, CanGro in St. Davids and Exeter, and Quaker in Trenton.

An example: This shortage was felt in a homeless shelter in Ottawa last July. It's my understanding that for the first time in over 20 years, the volunteers at the Shepherds of Good Hope discovered that their cupboards were bare. They just didn't have enough food that day, and they were forced to stop serving lunch to those recipients who were lined up outside.

However, what we often don't consider is the fact that even well-stocked food banks struggle with the ability to provide fresh, healthy food. In fact, the Ontario Association of Food Banks believes that over 72% of Ontarians who turn to food banks for help do not have access to the recommended daily servings of fruit and vegetables. As we all know, proper nutrition is essential to our well-being, but more importantly, it is essential to the good health of our young people and children, who, as I noted previously, rank among the 40% of those assisted by these local food banks.

We open our hearts and wallets when we donate at Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter, but for many food banks a time of significant need occurs from June to August. Rarely do we think of our local food bank during the summer and autumn harvest.

What is most perplexing about this particular issue is the fact that while food banks struggle to provide for those in need, Ontario farmers who are also struggling dispose of or plough back into their fields or send to landfill more than 25 million pounds of fresh, nutritious food each harvest. Why is this? Well, the answer in many instances is that much of the food left behind is considered seconds. While perfectly healthy, tasty and fresh, the produce is often not chosen for sale because of cosmetic reasons, such as size, shape or colour. One is led to ask why those in the farming community don't just donate this food today. Some do, but the unfortunate fact in Ontario today is that in most cases farmers cannot even afford the costs incurred to collect, process and deliver the food to food banks, despite a clear desire and interest to do so. While farmers may wish to donate what remains of what they have grown, we simply cannot expect them to take a financial loss in order to hire the extra hands to glean and gather this excess food. Simply, we have the food; we just can't get it to those in need.

My proposed legislation will provide a financial incentive for producers to donate, that will provide producers, at minimum, with a tax credit which will help to offset some of the costs associated with growing and harvesting fresh produce, while in many cases it will provide producers with a net financial benefit for the donation of those surplus food products. This proposed tax credit would reduce the producers' tax burden, which

in turn should provide a strong incentive to make that donation.

Furthermore, the proposed non-refundable tax credit, worth up to 25% of the wholesale value of donated agricultural products, will provide a high return of investment for the Ontario government. Simply put, it will cost the province very little in lost revenue. In fact, according to statistics gathered by the Ontario Association of Food Banks, it will cost roughly \$750,000 in 2011 for an increase of up to five million tonnes of food. These figures suggest that this simple tax credit could in fact provide a rate of return of \$7 for every dollar donated. Moreover, this number should increase year over year as the program's profile increases.

I believe that my proposed bill presents a concrete solution which will not only assist local food banks but also local farmers and struggling Ontarians who are our friends and neighbours. It will fight two problems in our province: hunger and waste.

It is my hope that this piece of legislation, if passed, will help to neutralize the cost placed on local farmers to collect and donate their excess produce while at the same time providing a significant incentive to do so.

In turn, I would like to thank the outpouring of support that I have received in regard to Bill 73. I would especially like to thank the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Ontario Association of Food Banks, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, the Holland Marsh Growers, the Salvation Army, the Daily Bread Food Bank, and many farmers and food banks across the province for their continued support.

I would also like to thank all the members, and especially the member from Northumberland—Quinte West, on the benches opposite, for recognizing the simple wisdom of Bill 78 and also for advancing their resolution. While I agree that a resolution may be a nice gesture, in the end it provides nothing today for Ontario's agricultural community and even less for those Ontarians who struggle to put food on their tables.

In this House today, we have a means to do something concrete and positive for many people across the province who, through no fault of their own, are depending on food banks to feed their families. Thus, I would hope that the members of this House will assist me in moving this piece of legislation through the House to the benefit of Ontario's less fortunate.

As my grandchildren would say, "Papa, this is a no-brainer." According to all figures and statistics, my bill will cost the government very little and provide great benefit to those in need in our province.

In 2009, Ontario farmers were forced to dispose of or plow back into their fields fresh, healthy produce, and at the same time, food banks went wanting across the province, seeing a drop in donations of over a million pounds of food a year and a drastic increase in food bank use.

If passed in 2011, my bill will cost less than \$750,000 in lost revenue but will provide our food banks with over

five million pounds of fresh, nutritious produce. While it may not solve all the problems, it is a simple first step.

It's time to fight hunger with local foods, so today I ask this chamber to act to help curb hunger and waste in our province by passing Bill 78. Let's send it to committee, where, if there are improvements to make by additions or deletions to improve this bill, I'd ask that we advance it today and let's all work for the good of the farmers, the food banks, who have clients that certainly need this food, and all of our own constituents, since I know we have food banks, unfortunately, in every constituency and they're all in need.

I'd like to thank all the members who are here today for this debate, and I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to start off by saying, from the perspective of the NDP caucus—and my fellow members will be speaking later on this—this is a no-brainer.

I'll tell you, coming from the area I come from in Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, in my riding alone 20% of the people live below the poverty level. We are probably one of the hardest-hit regions in Ontario, next to sections of Toronto, so our food banks are constantly used, constantly crying out for support. This is a perfect solution to some of the problems in our food banks. We have a lot of local farms. We're fortunate in the Hamilton area to have an agricultural base, a metropolis, suburbs. We have the whole gamut of geological conditions that are right for this type of situation.

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The member from Sarnia—Lambton is right on with this one. Certainly our whole caucus will be supporting him on this effort, and I can't see how anyone wouldn't. It's certainly going to help a lot of people who are in dire need. I just can't say enough about his efforts in this case. I'm hoping that every person in this Legislature will see the light and do the right thing for the people who really need this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate, and I'll say right from the start that it's my intent, and I think the intent of others, to support the bill that's before us this afternoon. I think it's a very, very good bill.

It's always interesting in the House to note the approach that people bring to private members' time. Some of us think the glass is half full all the time; some of us see it as being half empty and it always being somebody else's fault. I think the idea that's being brought forward here today is one that's a progressive idea. It's a good idea. It's one that's worthy, I think, of all-party support today, and I hope that it does receive that support—as well as the previous resolution.

Hunger is not a new issue, unfortunately, in our society. Farming is not a new issue, either. It has been

around for a long time. Thank God, because it's how we feed ourselves. So for those who say this should have been done a long time ago, they're probably right. The fact is, it wasn't done a long time ago. The fact is, all three parties that are represented today in the Legislature could have done something about this a long time ago and chose not to. That's water under the bridge. Today, you've got a member who has brought forward a good idea. You've got another member who has brought forward a good resolution speaking to the same issue—that by being innovative, by being creative, we can express that desire to help other people in our society. I think that's what brings out the best of this House—when we're able to support motions such as this.

I get teased a little bit about being from Oakville. Everybody thinks we don't have issues in Oakville because it's generally near the top of the income list. Let me tell you that Oakville has as many problems as any other community in this fine province. It has a lot of good things about it—it's a wonderful community to live in—but there are those who are struggling in our community on a daily basis for reasons that just aren't within their own control, and from time to time they need help.

I want to thank the Ontario Association of Food Banks, who are here today. I want to thank them for the report they brought forward in the fall of 2009. They published a report entitled *Fighting Hunger with Local Food: A Proposal to Create an Ontario Food Producer and Processor Donation Tax Credit*. I think it was a wonderful idea. The report pointed out quite rightly that a tax credit could support many local constituencies that are in need of assistance—it can support local food banks, local farmers, processors and low-income Ontarians—and it listed some of the benefits of doing that. It said it would provide an incentive for producers and processors to donate in the first place. It would increase the supply of nutritious food to food banks and to families in Ontario. The resolution that we heard before is based upon this report. We know that, having had a debate on it. By and large, I think the private member's bill that's coming forward is based on the same information. We've had representatives from the Ministry of Finance who have met with the Ontario Association of Food Banks to consider the concept of issuing a tax receipt or a tax credit for the donation of food.

By passing this, were this to come to pass, it's going to provide a much broader base for potential donations to the food bank system that we have here in Ontario. It's going to encourage more people to donate, and it's going to encourage a broader base of donations in the first place.

I'm supportive of any concept that's going to help our food banks, any concept that also is going to help our agricultural industry.

Earlier today during statements, I had the opportunity to speak about Kerr Street Ministries, which has a food bank that supports a large number of people in the Oakville community. As is the case with food banks, from time to time they experience shortages of food. The

shelves were almost bare at Kerr Street Ministries this year. I think had we had this tax credit in place, that may not have been the case.

I know our government certainly has been supportive of food banks in the past. I think all of us from all parties that are represented in the House look forward to the day when food banks are not necessary. However, I think they are a reality, certainly in the short-term time to come and perhaps even further into the future.

I recently held a community barbecue at Kerr Street Ministries, and it was interesting that we got a lot of donations there from Everdale farms to hold that barbecue, which is a farm in the Hillsburgh area. Just last weekend, I had a little bit more time to spend down the street at the Kerr Village Farmers Market. They've just received an OMIF grant and they're developing a new and unique concept. They're going to contact Ontario farmers within a hundred miles and invite them to participate at the market and, at the end of the day, any food that is not sold at the market will be turned over to the food bank. I think that's a wonderful idea for two organizations that are almost neighbours.

I think it really is an opportunity for us in the House today to support what is a very good idea that's being brought forward. There are those who, as I said previously, will take a different outlook on this and use it, maybe, to gain political points. Even though the person who has brought this forward is an honourable member from a different party, I have no problem supporting this. I think it's a wonderful idea. I thank the member for bringing it forward. It's motions like this that I think bring out the best in this House, as I said earlier. It's a chance to, perhaps, forget about the past, maybe forget about the things we could have done or we should have done, and it's a chance to move forward based on recommendations that are being brought forward by the Ontario Association of Food Banks.

So, to those progressive members who are going to vote for this, I think that they deserve our admiration today in the House and I think the people who are providing this service deserve that admiration, as well as the person who has brought forward the motion today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to support Bill 78, Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), introduced by my colleague the member from Sarnia-Lambton. We've had considerable debate today about the need for a tax credit for farmers, and I'm pleased to see the support that this idea has on both sides of the House.

Yesterday, I had the privilege of meeting with the members from the Ontario Association of Food Banks. They had two messages. They reiterated the growing need in Ontario's food banks and talked about the importance of this bill. The statistics they provided are a cause for concern. Food bank usage in Ontario has increased by 20% in the last year alone. Over 375,000 Ontarians are forced to turn to food banks every month,

an all-time high for the province. They believe that this bill will make a difference, that it will help farmers and help food banks across Ontario to feed Ontarians in need and it will help ensure that people who are forced to use food banks have access to good, healthy and fresh food.

In a letter supporting this bill, the Ontario Association of Food Banks said, "Food banks and families across Ontario have been hit hard by the economic downturn. Despite reports of an economic turnaround, the situation is very difficult on the front line. We continue to witness significant increases in the number of neighbours turning to community food banks for support, and our ability to respond to the tremendous need that exists is constrained by pressures on our food supply. We certainly believe in the need to ensure economic security through bold and progressive social and economic policy, but there is a need to respond to the immediate need that exists in towns and city across the province."

At the same time, we know every year there are farmers who are simply unable to find a market for some of the food that they grow. It is estimated that each year over 25 million pounds of fresh, nutritious food is disposed of or ploughed back into farmers' fields in Ontario. We know that Ontario farmers are proud of the food that they grow, and I want to commend and thank the farmers who are already making donations to their local food bank. However, unfortunately, there are many more farmers across Ontario who would be happy to donate excess crops to the food bank but simply can't absorb the cost of harvesting and transportation. It is cheaper to plough the food under than to pay for the labour and machinery to harvest it and truck it to the food bank.

This tax credit is a simple solution that makes sense and will help farmers and people in need. I want to commend the member from Sarnia-Lambton for introducing this bill and for all the work that he has done to promote this issue. I know he has been working hard and has earned the support of the food bank association, as well as several farm organizations. I'm pleased that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture is supporting this bill and that Bette Jean Crews is sitting up in the gallery here today to demonstrate that support in person on behalf of the farmers of Ontario. There are a number of other agricultural organizations supporting this bill, including the fruit and vegetable growers, who are also represented in the gallery today. The Holland Marsh Growers' Association is also here.

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About two years ago, I had the opportunity to attend an agriculture round table in Sarnia-Lambton that the member organized. I know him, from that meeting as well as his work here at Queen's Park, as a strong advocate for the farmers in his riding and for all his constituents.

We know that this government needs to take a number of steps to support our farmers, including implementing the provincial portion of the business risk management program based on the cost of production and cutting red

tape. The McGuinty government has missed many opportunities to do the right thing to support our farmers. This morning, the Premier missed another one when he failed to immediately move second and third reading for this bill.

I hope the members on both sides of the House will take this opportunity to demonstrate their support for farmers by supporting this bill and that, for the government, this is the first step in delivering the support Ontario farmers desperately need.

Again, I want to commend the member from Sarnia-Lambton for bringing this great bill forward. I'm happy to support it and look forward to it going through second reading today, committee after this, and hopefully third reading and the law of the land before it's completed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, I'll be supporting this motion.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Exactly, Monsieur Bailey from Sarnia-Lambton.

This is a good debate to have. This is a good bill to be debating and supporting. But I want to say, if I can, if I can be permitted to talk about issues connected to poverty, issues as they relate to the food banks, why we have a United Way at all and why it is we are shifting our attention to charities.

If you notice, we have a growing number of people who are going to food banks. There's a steady increase over the years. We used to think that the use of food banks was something that happened in recessions or deep depressions. When it happens in good times, you say, "What's going on?" There is an increase of food bank use in good economic times, which we have seen, without mentioning any previous regime, and which we've seen over the years. No one says, "What is happening?"

You see the fact that more and more people are contributing to the United Way when it used to be \$50 million, and then they increase the pressure on people to give so it goes to \$60 million, and then they increase the pressure to give and it goes to \$70 million. Every year it goes up: \$80 million and \$90 million. Now they're at \$120 million.

We're urging people to be charitable, give out of their own pocket. We give to charity so that the United Way can give to people in need. What's happening? We are shifting from government obligations to charities. We're going to churches and we're going to individuals, saying, "Please give a little more because poor people need it." And when you ask the people in government to do a little more for those in need, we struggle to get something out of them. We're moving from government obligations to charitable donations. We're making people feel guilty for not giving.

Then we have a government that is happily saying, "We gave \$1.2 billion in income tax cuts," and we have a deficit of \$20 billion. We don't have any money to give, but we're giving it away in the form of income tax cuts,

giving it away to people like me, and others who are wealthier than me, who don't need a tax break. And we have a deficit and we have growing poverty in this province.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek says 20% of his community is below the poverty line. That's huge. What are we as governments doing? What does government say when a growing number of middle-class people are being squeezed out of that class and shrinking into the working poor? Because that's what's happening in our province; that's what's happening worldwide. The middle class is losing and disappearing slowly, losing those benefits it had, losing those good unionized jobs it had. And they are in jeopardy, often, of being a pay-check away from lining up at the food banks.

We're not really having the discussion we should be having. I support your bill, but the discussion is: Why do we have so much poverty? Why do we have so much unemployment when for the last 15, 20 years, we're reducing the taxes of corporations who say that by doing so we're going to create more and more work? And yet, we have high unemployment. We've been giving tax breaks to corporations since I can remember, but for the last 15 years, both Liberal governments federally and federal Conservatives are just giving our money away, with a promise that by so doing we create work—and we don't create work. We are just giving our money away to them. The provincial government is giving \$5 billion to the corporations, no strings attached—God bless—and we have a \$20-billion deficit.

Then, when we have to do something as useful as this, that says, "Let's give a tax credit to farmers who otherwise might not be able to get their product to the market to be able to sell it," to do something with it, and therefore it goes to waste—we put that good stuff into the earth so that we can regenerate good food for the next season, but it's food that's lost, that could be used by 140,000 children who go hungry every day.

For me, it's an easy bill to support. I wish we could discuss the other issue, the causes of poverty, why we have it. I wish we could discuss the fact that governments are giving away their obligations and their responsibilities and passing them on to the church and other volunteer organizations that do work for free, for nothing. I wish we could debate that. But we're not. We go around the fringes. That's what we do. But until we can have that debate, we have to deal with these bills. Michael Prue from Beaches–East York raised it a year ago. I thought it was a good idea then. I think it's a good idea today. I think we could move beyond studying, but if we have to study it, okay, let's study it. That's okay. But I think we can move beyond that easily and quickly.

I hope today we have enough members from all three political parties to support the motion from the member from Sarnia–Lambton and move the agenda of how we deal with poverty along, and in the process, help the food bank who are doing great work and help the farmers sustain the lives that they have and making our life a little better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on private members' business Bill 78, Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers).

This is an interesting initiative by the member from Sarnia–Lambton, one that I can support. I would say I can support initiatives in principles that support our food-producing sector and those who have made great contributions to Ontario, and our food banks that provide the assistance for the less fortunate in our society.

This bill is similar to the earlier motion from the member from Northumberland–Quinte West except for two significant differences; that is, number one, recognizing that food processors are an important part of the food-producing sector in Ontario. This sector is not included in the bill, but was included in the motion. His motion also recommends that the Ministry of Revenue "assess the costs and benefits and work towards establishing an Ontario food producer and processor donation tax credit which would allow for a non-refundable tax credit that could be provided to meat processors, dairy farmers and" other "processors, farm gleaners sites, farmers' markets, fruit and vegetable farmers" that donate food to Ontario food banks.

The significant point to be made here is to assess the cost and benefits of this initiative, a very important factor in this particular bill. Can the government afford the lost revenue in today's economic situation of deficit budgets? Can the government replace the lost revenue through other initiatives, now and in the future? Can the government estimate what the real and ongoing costs of this initiative would be? Do we have all the controls and procedures in place? Who gets the credit? When do they get it? I've heard from food banks of food being delivered that expires within a couple of days, and the bank does not have the opportunity to distribute it on time.

1510

I have these little concerns. I support the initiative, and I support my colleague who says we should review and assess it.

My point here is, as a government, we should be making informed decisions with all the details after we have looked at it thoroughly, especially in today's economy.

My colleague from Sarnia–Lambton knows that the bill he's bringing forward has a cost to the government and the taxpayers of Ontario and would require our finance people to take a good look at it. We must be responsible and we must be accountable to our taxpayers for the decisions we make here on their behalf on a daily basis.

No discredit to my friend. He may be doing this because he believes it's the right thing to do on behalf of his constituents, and I give him credit for that because that's what we're here for on a daily basis.

Our government has provided great support to Ontario's food industry over the years, and I just want to raise a couple of them that I know of myself. The minister mentioned just recently in the House that we've invested \$27 million in broadband services in rural Ontario communities to help the farmers and the people who live in rural Ontario.

We've invested over \$2 billion in the food processing sector; this has created and protected some of the jobs that exist in that sector.

We have provided \$1.8 billion in assistance to farmers to stabilize their income over the years.

We have provided \$98 million for 275 rural economic development projects over the years.

This government has been on the forefront of helping the farming industry. And as a member who sat on the poverty committee, I can tell you that we've considered everything to help the poor people in Ontario, the vulnerable people in Ontario—those who are in need.

If you look at the government's Open Ontario plan, it includes a Buy Local strategy, with marketing campaigns for "Good Things Grow in Ontario" and the expansion of the Foodland Ontario program.

I would say that I support this initiative; I support my colleague for what he's doing, but I do have some concerns that the government must do what is right. We must review this particular issue, and when we decide to do it—which I would hope that we do, because I truly believe it's something that will benefit all—it will benefit the farm industry, it will benefit the food banks and it will benefit those people who need assistance in our community. But we must do what is right on behalf of the taxpaying public.

Again, I'd say I support considering tax credits, as this bill moves through the system, but clearly it requires some work. I truly believe that my colleague from Northumberland—Quinte West's motion has more to it, and as a responsible government, we should consider his motion in the same light as the bill. Hopefully, as we consider that particular motion or we consider this bill, the ministry would bring something forward so that we could do what's right for Ontario and find that balanced approach.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to join the discussion on Bill 78 this afternoon, a bill brought forward by my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton. I'm very pleased to support his bill.

As I said, speaking to some folks earlier, this bill is a win-win-win. The farmers will receive a tax credit for something that they can donate that otherwise may have gone to waste; the food banks will receive much-needed donations to their establishments in a time of increasing demand; and of course, most importantly, those people who desperately need that food from those food banks will be receiving more as a result of this.

It's interesting that the resolution that was brought forth earlier today—and the member for Northumber-

land—Quinte West, while saying he was going to support this bill, also took the time to point out what he thought were the weaknesses and the failures of the bill. Well, we've got to get a couple of things straight. First of all, this issue was brought up to the government in the pre-budget hearings. This is not new. It has been going on for years, but certainly this year it was brought up before the hearings. My colleague from Sarnia—Lambton consulted with stakeholders before bringing forth his bill.

If the government or the members on the opposite side believe there are ways that this bill can be improved, they can do that through amendment. We can certainly incorporate food processors and include them in this bill through the amendment process. But they're looking for reasons to be negative about the bill. My good friend from Scarborough—Rouge River was going through the financial accounting minutiae, which is really not the important part of this bill. We have people who can figure that out. And I've got to believe that the folks at the food bank are going to look after all of the problems that this bill creates for them, because the benefits that this bill will accrue to them will be much greater than any problems that this bill can create for them. I have infinite faith that they will make this work. So don't be looking for reasons to say no. We should be looking for reasons to say yes.

I know my friend from Northumberland—Quinte West chastised members on this side because we were being critical of a good idea. We're not being critical of a good idea but being critical of the way that the government side brought this forward. There was no indication prior to this week that the member from Northumberland—Quinte West even had a—there was nothing even on the order paper.

We have them talking about a resolution versus a bill. People should also be aware that regardless of the value or the good intentions of the member's resolution, it has no power whatsoever to bind this Legislature or the government to act. On the other hand, a bill such as the one presented by my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton does compel this body to act and will compel the government to actually act, should that bill be passed.

So I would urge all members to do the right thing: get this bill passed, get it to committee. The member has indicated without any reservation that he will work with all members on all sides of this House to deal with the amendments that are necessary to make this the best possible piece of legislation; to benefit our farmers, our food bank operators and the people who desperately need the help of those food banks; to help them all in the best way possible. Let's get this through the process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour to rise and to speak to this bill, which we're going to support. As my colleague from Trinity—Spadina said, it's a no-brainer. Commendations, in fact, to the Progressive Conservative Party for doing the work needed to bring it forward.

It is a very sad day, I think, when partisanship in this place trumps morality and ethicality. I think that Ontar-

ians have very little time for the kind of partisanship that gets played out here, particularly when we're dealing with a calamity.

We're dealing with a national disaster—homelessness in Ontario. We're dealing with a national disaster: poverty. We haven't seen poverty rates like this in the province of Ontario since the 1930s. Let's face it, that's what we're involved in now. And with all due respect to my friends across the aisle, what they're doing isn't working. Poverty rates are not coming down; in fact, they're going up. One in six children in this province lives in poverty. That's the reality. Anything we can do as a body, whoever brings it forward, we should do.

I don't understand why the government can't simply act on this. It's sad not to see more cabinet ministers here. It's sad that 11 months ago, our member from Beaches—East York raised this and now we're having this discussion 11 months later. How many children have gone to bed hungry in that 11-month period? How many have gone to bed hungry who could have been fed had this bill been passed 11 months ago? Friends, we're talking about children here. We're talking about families.

1520

My friend from Trinity—Spadina raised the issue of the discussion about poverty, period. Yes, we could go into it. Yes, there are great examples of other places that do it better. I'm thinking of our wonderful friends who are in attendance here from faith communities, who do so much. The Salvation Army is a beacon for all of those who need help. We have to help them. That's our job here. We have to help them do their job. This is a very simple, cost-effective way of doing that.

We don't need to study it anymore. Please. With all due respect, the member from Scarborough—Rouge River, this is in place in other jurisdictions. It's already working in other jurisdictions, in states. It's working already. We don't need to study it. Another child will go hungry every minute that we study it. What we need to do is to put it into place—this, among many other things, we need to put into place.

Again, to go back to my friend from Trinity—Spadina, the question of poverty is not just a question. We're talking about lives here. We're talking about real people who go to bed really hungry every night. I grew up in a Bill Davis Ontario—he looks like a socialist by comparison to what we're getting these last few years from this government—where you could actually live on welfare and pay rent and feed your children.

All we're asking for here is a very small step—not to build the 20,000 units of housing the government promised—hey, not even mentioning that—not to talk about real programs to really attack what we call poverty in this province, but just one small step. But it's a small step that will actually feed children.

I know we're going to vote on this, but it's not enough. We need to see from the other side of the aisle a government in action that brings this forward as law.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak in support of my colleague and seatmate, Bob Bailey, the member for Sarnia—Lambton, and his private member's bill.

Bill 78, the food bank donation tax credit for farmers, is an important and long-overdue piece of legislation. I know it will help three vital components of my riding of Leeds—Grenville: farmers, food bank organizers and volunteers, and, of course, families in need.

I know the farmers of Leeds—Grenville are already a generous group and give so much to the communities they call home. This bill will recognize that with a much-needed tax credit, and I thank Bob Bailey, the member for Sarnia—Lambton.

I'm going to talk about some of the people in my riding. The president of the Grenville Federation of Agriculture, Adrian Wynands of ChrisAnn Farms in North Augusta and Jolanda Farms in Roebuck, says the bill "is a great thing for farmers, and food banks need all the help they can get."

Ruth Vogel of the Leeds County Federation of Agriculture is another enthusiastic supporter of Bill 78. Here's what she had to say: "It's a win-win situation for both farmers and food banks. It's a great idea."

Looking at the impact of Mr. Bailey's bill—the member for Sarnia—Lambton—we can understand that poverty and hunger aren't just big-city problems. The steady erosion of family budgets, thanks to this government's decision on the HST, electricity rates and more, are forcing families to make tough choices. At the end of the day, it's often the grocery list that is being sacrificed, and moms and dads are turning to food banks in record numbers.

I'd now like to talk about some of the groups that deliver care and compassion in my riding: Operation Harvest Sharing in Brockville; Food for All in Prescott, Cardinal and Spencerville; the Athens Area Ministerial Food Bank; the Roll Aid Centre Food Bank in Seeley's Bay; the Gananoque Food Bank; the Kemptonville Salvation Army food bank; and food banks in Delta, Elgin, Portland, at the Merrickville community health centre, the Westport United Church and St. Ann's parish in Merrickville-Wolford.

This Saturday, I'll be in Prescott for the Food for All Food Bank's Bottom Line Food Challenge, founded in 2002. Food for All officials Shorey Bowen and Bonnie Gommert say that the food bank has already had a steady increase in usage. It serves South Grenville, and helped 1,128 individuals in 2009. I might add that 35% of those are under the age of 18. They also provide 23 infants with formula every month.

In Brockville, the story is similar: Operation Harvest Sharing, with their co-chair, Myra Garvin, which serves 430 families every month. Between January and August of this year, it's up more than 7%.

In Seeley's Bay, you can find people like volunteer administrator Donna Robinson and the ROLL Aid Centre Food Bank. It was formed in 1998 because of the ice storm. They serve 115 people each month.

In Westport, Bev Heyman operates their operation under the local United Church. In four years, their group has served 40 families in Westport and Newboro. About 25% of those people are on a fixed income.

I'm urging everyone to support my good friend Bob Bailey's bill. Let's give farmers the tax relief they deserve and food banks and families the help they desperately need.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Sarnia-Lambton has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a privilege to rise today. I'd like to commend all of the speakers who were here today and who spoke, especially the members from Northumberland—Quinte West, Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Oakville, Oxford, Trinity—Spadina, Scarborough—Rouge River, Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and, of course, my seatmate here from Leeds—Grenville. It's a privilege to be able to respond to the debate that was here today.

It's important, I think. If we did nothing else for the next 90 days—someone did a calculation that we're going to sit for maybe 90 days before the House can rise—I think this could be one of the most important things we could do for these children that the member from Toronto just spoke about a number of minutes ago. I think it's very important that we try and move this forward, bring this debate and forget about who could have done what and when.

Let's take it to committee. I agree with the member from Northumberland—Quinte West and other members who spoke here: Let's take it to committee, make improvements to it. If there are some things we have to take out of it to make it work, let's get it there. There's been enough debate about it. Members have known about this. Obviously, it's come up at finance committee over the years. I would say, let's move it forward. There's obviously a need out there. Like the member from Trinity—Spadina said, these children are often going to bed at night hungry, and being a grandfather and a father myself, I can't imagine that.

I would encourage all the members to do everything we can to do this. Let's move this bill forward, get it into committee after third reading, and do our best to implement the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. For those in the galleries and those watching at home, we'll vote on this ballot item in about 50 minutes.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
AND HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT
AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT
DES VOIES PUBLIQUES
ET DES TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN

Mr. Norm Miller moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act / Projet de loi 100, Loi

modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for his presentation. Mr. Miller.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to debate this private member's bill, Bill 100. Let me briefly begin by just explaining what the bill does.

Essentially, when a provincial secondary highway, as designated in regulation by the bill, is being rebuilt or repaved, when that happens on a designated highway, then a minimum of one metre of the shoulder would be paved when that highway is being rebuilt. As well, when that paved shoulder is added, there would also be signs that would be added that would say "Share the road" for that new section of highway that has paved shoulders. That's briefly what the bill would be doing.

I'm going to go through and talk a bit about why this private member's bill—I think there are lots of good reasons—and also talk a bit about the benefits of this private member's bill.

I would say it comes as much from living in a rural riding that depends on tourism and has lots of secondary provincial highways, where some have parts with paved shoulders and some have district roads that have paved shoulders. I'd simply tell you that where those paved shoulders exist, they are used primarily by cyclists, but also by other people walking or jogging. I would also say that over the last nine years, going back to when I had my nomination meeting—I know that in my nomination speech I talked about adding more trails as a benefit to the tourism economy in Parry Sound—Muskoka, and that included paving shoulders.

1530

Also, where specific highways have been getting rebuilt in Parry Sound—Muskoka, I've had constituents write to me, and in every case where that has happened, I have written to the Ministry of Transportation encouraging them to pave a section of the shoulder on the highway that was being rebuilt. As a matter of fact, two years ago, in 2008, they were rebuilding Highway 118 east, which happens to head out to where I live, in Vankoughnet. Most of that section of highway does have a paved shoulder, and they were rebuilding about a seven-kilometre section.

I was written to and phoned by Mr. Tim Rainey asking if I could contact the ministry to encourage them to do the little section that was being rebuilt. I got a letter back from the ministry essentially giving a bureaucratic reason why they couldn't do it: "While I appreciate your request, the ministry is currently focusing its resources on rehabilitating aging pavements and bridges"—basically, "Sorry, we can't do it." They actually did pave a bit of the shoulder anyway, so it was better than the old situation where there was no paved shoulder. So I have had a negative response. I've also just suggested the policy to the ministry and had negative responses.

I would say that recently—in fact, today—I received a response to another request from the riding, based on

Highway 518, and it's more encouraging. They state in this letter on Highway 518, which I literally received today from the new minister: "All existing fully paved shoulder locations will be reinstated and additional locations are being considered in the design where warranted for maintenance purposes." So that's an encouraging change. I would also note that recently the government did agree to pave a section of Highway 6; I think it's on Manitoulin Island.

So I'm pleased to see that trend, because I've had many years of absolute rejection, and now there is a slight improvement. They aren't saying it's for cyclists; they're saying it's for maintenance purposes. Frankly, I don't care what they say it's for, as long as there's a minimum of a metre of paved shoulder on these secondary highways.

The case right now is that people are cycling on the highways with no paved shoulders. Frankly, when you do so, you're taking your life in your hands. In fact, when I did a press conference a week ago to promote this, Eleanor McMahon, whose husband, Greg Stobbart, an OPP sergeant who was killed in 2006, was at the press conference. Four cyclists in Quebec, on a section of the highway that didn't have a paved shoulder, were just recently killed. One of my colleagues sent me this clipping from September 20—I assume it's from Ottawa—talking about John Barton, who was recently killed on August 13 riding on a highway where the bike lane was closed.

So there are some very, very significant safety concerns, particularly for cyclists, that would certainly be the number one consideration, especially if you have an east-west highway where you're driving into the sun. If a cyclist is on the paved part, you can't even see them at certain times of the day. That little bit of paved shoulder just creates a huge safety advantage.

According to the British Medical Journal, the most important deterrent to riding bikes expressed by non-cyclists is fear of motor traffic. Canadian data suggests that "provinces that have invested the most in cycling tend to have the highest rates of cycling and also the lowest rates of cycling mortality," and that's similar to European data. "Highway capacity and safety is improved for both cyclists and motorists through the provision of a separate travel space and increased clearances." Studies in the US, Israel and Australia report that accidents are significantly reduced on a per-vehicle-kilometre basis where paved shoulders exist. Accident reduction ranges vary from 15% in Minnesota to 60% in Australia, and a 20% to 50% reduction in run-off-road crashes. A metre of asphalt may not sound like a huge buffer, but it can be the difference between life and death. There are obvious safety benefits.

I don't have much time, so I'm going to race through some of the other benefits.

Health is a huge benefit. I know there was an article in the Toronto Star last week about the cost of diabetes. The cost of diabetes is over \$4 billion, and it's predicted to be up to \$7 billion by 2020. You can reduce the incidence of diabetes by more active living.

By creating more places for people to cycle, that's an opportunity for more activity.

We have a lot of young people who have obesity problems. Once again, providing an opportunity to be active and for people to ride to work or to ride for recreation will have tremendous benefits in terms of the quality of life for those individuals, but also in terms of costs to our health system.

There are tremendous economic benefits for tourism. This past Victoria Day weekend, my wife, Christine, and I decided to go to Prince Edward county and spend a couple of days there. We took kayaks and bicycles. For a lot of people, cycling is one of the things that they'll be looking for in an area. They may not be going only to cycle—they may be going to golf and kayak and who knows what else—but that's one of the things that, for a lot of people, is on the list.

When we were in Prince Edward county, I noted that some of the shoulders were paved. On the cycling maps they hand out, they actually note which shoulders are paved and which are not paved. It's a big benefit for people living year-round and also for visitors and for cottagers—for tourism. It's the 10th most common outdoor activity.

Poor cycling infrastructure and safety are much larger deterrents to bicycling than poor weather. In fact, European countries with similar weather to Ontario have a much higher cycling rate.

"A big part of tourism strategy is to continue adding cycling opportunities"—that's from Steve Furness, Owen Sound's tourism manager.

At the very beginning of my talk, I neglected to note that Dan Andrews, director of the Trans Canada Trail Ontario, is here today visiting with us. Thank you very much, Dan, for coming in. This is what Dan has to say: "Coupled with the ongoing move towards healthier communities in Ontario and getting people moving in alternative ways, this action will increase cycling tourism destination development by providing operators with a mix of local recreational trail and on-road routes to attract visitors."

I can see I've only got three minutes left, and I'm not going to be able to get through everything I wanted to say.

Obviously, there are tremendous benefits for tourism. We had the first Bike Train coming to Parry Sound—Muskoka a month or so ago, making a stop in Gravenhurst. People came up from Toronto with their bikes, spent the weekend and got the train back. It also went to South River, North Bay and the Niagara area. I can see that happening more and more in the future, and it will happen more in areas where they know they can safely cycle.

It's also safer for motorists. There's a common accident in driving: Someone is driving on a secondary highway, they drift on to the shoulder, and depending on the shoulder they might drop down a bit, the driver overreacts, overcorrects, and they either spin out into the ditch or they spin out into oncoming traffic. There have

been many cases where people are killed in accidents like that. Obviously, if the shoulder is paved, there's a little bit more of a margin of safety for the motorist.

There are also cost benefits in terms of the maintenance of the road. I know that you don't have to grade the shoulder as much, so there's that benefit of saving on that maintenance cost. Eleanor McMahon, at the press conference, stated that that's a 15-year payoff. So there is a payoff just from that alone.

In the last minute, I would like to just note that I received a letter from the District Municipality of Muskoka that was lending support to my private member's bill. They talk about the fact that they have an active transportation strategy, in recognition of the important health and tourism benefits of active transportation:

"The district of Muskoka has recently adopted an active transportation strategy that identifies bicycle routes, primarily based on the district road system. In order to improve safety, the strategy recommends the installation of Share the Road and way-finding signage and/or paved shoulders along Muskoka roads identified as being part of the active transportation network."

I won't have time to read the whole letter, so I'll conclude with, "It is our understanding that you are planning to introduce a private member's bill to promote the paving of road shoulders on provincial highways that are scheduled for resurfacing. The district of Muskoka would support any efforts of the province to promote cycling, and other forms of active transportation. I would be pleased to meet with provincial representatives to discuss this further."

That's from Gord Adams.

1540

I have received a tremendous amount of support in the last week, since doing a news conference, from health units from other areas that are interested in active transportation, from cycling shops, from many different organizations. I just think it makes sense, based on some of the various positives I have just outlined, and I would love to see the province adopt it as a policy so we have many more opportunities for safe cycling around the province of Ontario.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to talk about this private member's bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to support this bill because I think it's eminently reasonable, and I love it when Tories are reasonable. You just can't help but like them—right?—when they do that. You read through the bill and you say, "What is bad about this bill? Not much."

The member for Parry Sound—Muskoka says, "The construction must occur when the highway or portion of it is significantly repaved or resurfaced." It doesn't sound revolutionary to me. Common sense, right? I thought I would get a chuckle from the Common Sense Revolution times, but I got nothing.

It makes sense. And, "The minister is not required to construct a paved shoulder where doing so would be

impracticable." Even more sense. So he's saying to the Liberals, "Let's work together on this," right? I'm saying to the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, it's something New Democrats find reasonable.

He makes a good case that this is good for matters of safety. I can't imagine walking on a secondary highway or on a highway that doesn't have a paved area for someone like me to walk on it, and it would be dangerous to do so, so it discourages people from walking. Secondly, cyclists dare not cycle on a highway that doesn't have a paved shoulder and/or where doing so could cause harm to the cyclist and/or driver. Particularly, the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka says that from time to time, car drivers, if they are not paying attention very much, could end up on the shoulder where it goes down and it's not surfaced very well and there are stones. That could cause a driver to, of course, turn to the left in a way that could be dangerous, causing harm not just to himself but to others.

There's a whole wide swath of reasons to pave the shoulders by one metre, as the member has recommended. That deserves our support.

Originally, I was just going to say, "This is a reasonable bill. I'm going to support it," and I was going to sit down. Then I thought I would say a few words. There isn't much to say by way of opposition. I'm looking forward to see who's got the lead from the Liberal Party and what arguments they are going to make against the bill. I think it's coming from the other side, because on this side they're quiet. I'll be waiting to hear—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Tons.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Tons. Mike Brown's got tons. I'm going to sit down and listen to your arguments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I want to thank the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka for bringing this private member's bill to the Legislature, and in doing so, I think I've got to put it in a bit of context. I represent a constituency with 2,234 kilometres of provincial highway in it. That is the second-largest constituency for highways in the province—our friend from Kenora—Rainy River has the largest number of kilometres—and I am pleased that we are already where the member is suggesting, at least in terms of building shoulders to highways. I can say that because the district of Manitoulin is one of the districts I represent, and on Highway 6—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So you're doing it?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Yes, we are already starting to do this. We are in the midst; the project had already been tendered on Highway 6 and was about to be built when the Minister of Transportation announced that we were to build up to one-metre shoulders, where practical, along that section of highway.

My good friend from—let's see, I'll get this right—Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, in the Bruce Peninsula just to the south of Manitoulin, also has a section of Highway 6 that is being redeveloped now and reconstructed. It also had the shoulders up to one metre that are going to be placed on that road.

I've represented a good portion of this riding for 23 years, and I've experienced the death of a cyclist—I'm trying to think of when, but it's probably pretty close to 23 years ago—on Highway 6 on La Cloche Island, which, most people would know, is the island just before you get to Manitoulin as you come south from Espanola. It is a very straight, wide-open, flat stretch of highway, yet a cyclist was killed there. A fellow by the name of Bill Caesar from Little Current lobbied at that point to have, when the highways were reconstructed, broader shoulders.

I'm pleased to report to you today that most of the work—well, all of the work on Highway 6 from Espanola through to Little Current is now complete. For most of it, there is a metre-wide shoulder. In some places, it is impractical to do that because of guard rails and certain things like that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, it's not exactly the cycling capital of Ontario, is it, Mike?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I hear the member from Renfrew say that it's not the cycling capital. Our people think it can be. Our people think that the district of Manitoulin, the major part of the which is an island, is an excellent place to have cyclists come to experience their passion—because for most people it is.

The member for Parry Sound—Muskoka probably knows our friend J.J. Hilsinger from the Water Tower Inn in Sault Ste. Marie, who has cycled from the north part of Africa to the southern tip—an amazing feat for not a young guy—and then followed that up by cycling across Asia, literally. That is quite the thing to do, I think most members would think. He was telling me the other day that he believes that places like Manitoulin, places like Muskoka and other places that have a highway network could benefit from this. I think also that St. Joseph Island, being an island, could do this.

I would tell the member—and I'm sure the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka knows it—that the section of Highway 17 from Sudbury to Sault Ste. Marie probably has a shoulder that is inches in most places, and it has far more cycling traffic on it than either Highway 6 down to Manitoulin or any of these other spots. I am absolutely afraid that those people out there cycling on that part of the highway are really putting their lives at risk. We have transport trucks by the hundreds go across there. It is the TransCanada Highway. It is how trucks move from western Canada to eastern Canada and vice versa. That section of highway, I would guess just by being out there a lot, has far more traffic of cyclists and transport trucks than anywhere else that I can think of in the constituency.

I would suggest to the member that the initiative is good. We will be supporting it. I think I have a little problem in the logistics, but that could work out. If you're going to actually have cycling trails, you can't just wait until they're going to redevelop part of the highway; you've kind of got to do it for the length of the highway in between places. I think you would recognize that as just a practical concern. It also is an expensive concern. Given the fact that we already have the safest highways

in North America, we have to ensure that we maintain that status.

I just want to tell the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka that we will be happily supporting his private member's bill, and I'm glad that, in some sense, he's catching up to where the government already is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to rise today and support my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka on his Bill 100, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act. I listened to the member from Algoma—Manitoulin; I will speak to that as well.

But the one thing that we do know is that the activity of cycling is becoming more and more prevalent each and every day: for recreational purposes, for health purposes. For many, many reasons, people are taking up the activity of cycling here on our highways in Ontario, and at the same time, our vehicular traffic continues to increase as well. So when you have an increasing number of cyclists and an increasing number of vehicles, the potential for vehicle-cyclist conflict increases. For that reason, I think that what my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka is asking for and suggesting is very practical and necessary.

1550

I know that my colleague from Algoma—Manitoulin spoke about the improvements to roads up in his district with respect to paved shoulders, and that's good; that's wonderful. But I also can tell you from my own experience, for example, in 2005 the highway between Eganville and Douglas was reconstructed, and at that time, there were significant changes made to corners—they were made safer and elongated so that they were less sharp—and at that time they didn't establish paved shoulders on that highway. So that kind of project has now kind of gone. There are spots where there are passing lanes, yes, but there's not a consistent paved shoulder on that highway between Eganville and Douglas, which I drive on a regular basis, and that would have been a good initiative at that time.

So what I'm saying to my colleague from Algoma—Manitoulin is, yes, the government can choose and the minister can choose to compel, suggest or otherwise, that there be a paved shoulder on that stretch of highway, but it's not required. This would require it, where practical, and as those potential conflicts increase, I think that would be very, very necessary. There is no question about it: It would add to safety; no question about it. I know my colleague talked about studies in the States. I have some here from Minnesota that implied the same thing. There's one from Iowa that reduced incidents by over 50%.

Interestingly enough, 15 years ago, the province of Quebec—probably on federal money—made the commitment, via its bicycle policy, to pave the shoulders of highways, promising to act wherever it resurfaces any such road bearing a daily traffic load of more than 5,000 vehicles. Quebec's Route verte infused \$5.4 million into the provincial economy in its first year of operation. So

they are ahead of the curve on this—no pun intended—with respect to safety on this issue.

When I speak about curves, I want to paint a scenario here. For those of you who live where there are a lot of four-lane highways, you may not see this as being as pertinent, but in my riding—and I know the member for Etobicoke knows it well, because she has visited my riding on more than one occasion—we have a lot of curvy roads and we also have a lot of tractor-trailer traffic. So here's the scenario: There is a tractor-trailer travelling east and a tractor-trailer travelling west. They're converging near a corner, and there's a cyclist or maybe a group of four or five cyclists who are in the middle of that corner. It's very, very difficult for those tractor-trailers to slow down enough, or stop if necessary, to ensure the safety of those cyclists. I run into it all the time myself, and I have made it a practice that, if necessary, I will come to a stop in order not to crowd the cyclist. The last thing I ever want to wake up to in the morning is to say that I killed a cyclist yesterday, because that would remind me every day. So I tend to be very careful, and I drive those roads all the time, but when you're travelling with a tractor-trailer that's a little less manoeuvrable and a little less nimble than my vehicle, it is a very, very dangerous scenario. And I see it all the time, where a cyclist and a large vehicle are having—it's a scary thing. If you're riding a bicycle that is of a mountain bike variety, you can leave that paved shoulder, that paved portion of the highway, even if you have to get on the gravel shoulder—carefully. But if you're driving a road bike with those thin little tires, you hit that shoulder and you're down. For various reasons, this is something that the government should be considering.

I can also tell you that back in 2008, I wrote a letter to the then Minister of Transportation, asking him for something very similar along these lines. I was actually not as brave as my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka; I only asked for two feet of shoulder at that time.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yikes. Two feet?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just two feet. The response I got was one that was not—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: “We can't do it. We can't afford it.”

Mr. John Yakabuski: Pretty well “can't do it,” yes.

Anyhow, I think that this is a great initiative. I commend my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka for bringing it forward. I believe it will enhance road safety for everyone here in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's absolutely an honour to stand and support this bill. It's something we've been talking about in the New Democratic Party for a long time now. Last year, when I brought in my three-foot bill—only because it's called that in other jurisdictions—our one-metre bill for city cyclists, keeping drivers three feet away from city cyclists, it was for the same reasons, the same safety, environmental and health concerns that my friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka has brought forward this bill, he being outside the city.

I have to say that it's not only for cyclists. I was out in the country this summer and was preparing for the half marathon. I know there are many members here who are doing the waterfront marathon next weekend, half or 5K. Trust me, it's safer to run along city streets than it is in the country and rural Ontario. Why? Because cars are travelling a lot faster, and there's not a paved shoulder on many of those highways. It's really quite frightening. You have to run facing traffic, and even then, it's concerning.

Absolutely, this is a no-brainer. I want to make it very clear to those watching or listening from home that we're not talking about a massive infrastructure investment here; we are talking about a retrofit process of those highways that are going to be worked on anyway. The highways that are going to be worked on anyway should be worked on with some intelligence and some foresight and in a way that keeps everyone safe—everyone.

Of course, anything that increases cycling is what we should be after. Anyone who has been to Denmark, Sweden or Amsterdam and has witnessed how those societies function would want to see cycling increased here. This is not only environmentally sound; it's also, of course, as others have pointed out, for our own health. But if we don't have safety as part of the package for cyclists, people will not bicycle.

I remember growing up in downtown Toronto; I grew up on Bedford Road, about two blocks north of Bloor Street. My mother wouldn't let me have a bike—and that was 15 or 20 years ago—because it was too dangerous back then. We've increased the flow of traffic significantly since then. It has become significantly more dangerous since then. I look at my own children, who cycle, and I'm concerned about their health in the city, never mind going out in the country.

You heard about Eleanor and her husband, the officer who was struck and killed doing exactly that. I would remind people listening and watching this that the bike summit is happening next week in Burlington. I know my friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka will be there, as will I.

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I think he's going to be there. It's incredibly important that we speak about this, that we speak about these issues, not only to the biking community, at such things as the bike summit, but to our friends and neighbours and to our constituents. Cycling needs to become easier, and it needs to become safer if we're going to help our environment.

One of the major causes, if not the major cause, of climate change in this country is too much driving. A friend of mine in the environmental movement said we should all feel a little guilty whenever we put gas in our cars. No kidding. But if we're to get out of our cars, we have to make cycling safer.

Absolutely, I support this initiative. There's no question about it. Again, I witnessed the member from Algoma–Manitoulin—yes, Highway 6, absolutely. We were calling for that actually at the press conference I did

for the three-foot rule. That got a lot of excitement going in the press and a lot of excitement going in the cycling community, and that was over a year ago. We were calling for highways to have—exactly what my friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka is calling for in his bill—a metre of paved shoulder on highways. We were delighted when we saw it happen, through the Minister of Transportation. In fact, kudos for that move.

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But this is hit-and-miss, so to speak. This is not a government program, right? This is not a law. What my friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka would like to see is that this become *de rigueur* for this government, that this become necessary; that whenever they rebuild, whenever they fix up, whenever they put in a new highway, this is part of the package so that we don't have to rely on the largesse of the Ministry of Transportation to just respond on an ad hoc basis. That's the difference. That's the difference between what the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka is recommending and what the government is doing. That's the gap we want to fill here.

So, absolutely; I mean, there's no question. This is clearly a bill that won't cost very much—I imagine my friend has costed it out in some way, shape or form—certainly not as much as the alternative, which is to leave things the way they are. And certainly, to leave things the way they are means that we will see more cyclists' deaths in rural Ontario.

Meanwhile, in downtown Toronto, where I'm from, we fight for similar moves on behalf of this government. In fact, the three-foot or one-metre rule for keeping cars away from cyclists, certainly more bike lanes, better-protected bike lanes—these are all moves that we need to be fighting for in our own constituencies, no matter where we are.

We need to be able to live in an Ontario where no mother has to say to any child ever again, "You can't have a bike; it's not safe to ride." For that reason alone I support the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and his brave move and will say the same at the bike summit next week in Burlington. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to stand and to support my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka, who, in the seven years that I've been here, in my mind has always had a reputation for being an effective and enlightened member and from whom, actually, I've learned a fair amount about life and conduct in the Legislature.

This is one that those members of the governing party are going to support because, among other things, we're inclined to like the bill. We're inclined to like what it proposes to do.

Many of us who have ridden our bikes all of our lives, and I'm one of those, know exactly what it feels like to be riding on a highway and to be passed by a speeding truck or a bus. You've felt the suction from the backwash of the air; you've been splashed with slush; you've been splashed with water; you've been honked at. You've

probably been very close to being sideswiped, and you've thought to yourself, "Gosh, I hope this is just not my day. I'd just like to get home and off this highway in one piece."

Some of the measures being quoted here allow both cyclists and motorists a little bit of breathing room, literally and figuratively, to be able to occupy the same piece of real estate but to be physically separate.

I've read the bill, and there are some things in it—like most private members' bills, it's a work in progress. In its first draft the bill says that it applies to every King's Highway. It talks about the fact that if any portion of a highway doesn't have a paved shoulder—and it talks about the construction of a paved shoulder, that it must occur and that the paved shoulder must extend one metre. It does allow for a little bit of wiggle room on behalf of the ministry, and it says the minister is not required to construct a paved shoulder to any portion of a highway "where to do so would be impracticable."

Accepting the fact that this is an intention to make life better for both motorists and cyclists, I think this is an excellent first start.

It's worth noting that Ontario has already awarded more than \$750,000 to 33 municipalities for projects that promote alternative forms of transportation, be it \$35,000 in my own city of Mississauga for secure bike parking lots; \$18,000 in the member's own riding for share-the-road signage; \$50,000 in Waterloo for more parking structures for bikes. But the member is talking more about the actual act of paved shoulders.

In federal-provincial grants, I'm looking at three very significant projects totalling about \$400,000, with roughly half of it from the province and the other half from the feds, leading to, in the member's own riding, extensions and upgradings of bike paths and trails that contribute to doing exactly what the member is proposing. So very clearly, the province, the member, the feds and, presumably, the municipalities are seeing the wisdom of being able to use your bicycle more safely and to get more places.

I guess, in something very intangible, I'm glad to see the member has come over on to the side of more infrastructure spending and recognizes, along with our government, the feds and the cities, that this is indeed a stimulus. In fact, let me quote from a couple of things that the member himself didn't get a chance to get to; I said I would try to get them on the record.

A Danish cost-benefit analysis study estimated that an investment of under half a billion euros would lead to a \$7-billion government saving. In Iowa, the Department of Transportation reports up to \$366 per mile in cost savings; again, the methodology of the study is not set out, but just quoting that at its face value. The Texas Transportation Institute suggested that bike lanes and paved shoulders have been found to have a benefit-to-cost ratio of approximately 5 to 1. North Carolina State University found something similar in a 9-to-1 cost ratio.

Where we are with this particular bill is as an expression of intent. We recognize that there is benefit for both motorists and cyclists. Our ministry has estimated

that to do more or less what's proposed by the member, using Iowa State University studies that suggest \$53,000 per mile to pave the amount of shoulder that is being suggested, would require an estimated investment of about a half a billion dollars on the part of the Ministry of Transportation to accomplish what the member is proposing—nearly 15,000 kilometres of bike paths in Ontario on the King's highways.

Accepting that we are not here to resolve all of these issues and to solve all of the problems in bringing forth an issue which I think, as a cyclist and as someone who is interested in helping people stay healthy, to use their bikes for those six or seven months in the year when we can—I think the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka has brought forth a thoughtful, reasonable private member's bill that deserves some further study by the ministry or in committee. I would be pleased to be a part of that. I thank him for bringing the bill forward. I intend to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm happy to rise today to support my colleague the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka's Bill 100, the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Amendment Act. It's certainly, in my opinion, a bill that deserves to go to committee and to be adopted by this Legislature.

I can think of so many reasons; first of all, this whole issue around public safety. I don't know how many times I've been on provincial highways, and even county roads, when I've come across people biking and they would not move over, because they're going over to a gravel shoulder. It could easily have caused an accident. I think the fact that we want to save lives and we put so much emphasis on things like helmets etc.—the public safety factor alone is key to this.

I'm so pleased today to see the Minister of Health Promotion in the House because I believe that when people are out biking and walking and using the resources we have in Ontario, it's good for people's physical fitness. Of course, that's why so many people use their bikes in the beginning. It's another factor that makes our provincial highways available to the citizens of this province in a healthy and safe manner.

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Another factor I thought that we should zero in on is the whole factor around tourism and the fact that when you have these initial investments—and maybe over the long period it is \$400 million or \$500 million, whatever we were talking about earlier. This is meant to be phased in. But you can just imagine, if you can create an environment in the province where biking tourism was as important as some of the other factors that we have in tourism today as well—I think this is something that the whole Ministry of Tourism would really capitalize on and should support as well.

I can tell you that the first area that I've seen in Ontario with this is the region of Waterloo. I was so impressed with what they had done around the Gamebridge area in the region. They've just done some amazing

walking trails and biking trails. And when they decided to do county road 47 from Casino Rama out to Washago, I actually asked, at that point, the county of Simcoe at some of their public meetings, "Why do you not have a biking lane here on the side of this road? Because there are so many cottages in that area, there are so many campgrounds, so many tourism operators." They looked at me and said, "Well, it's not a policy we have, we're not planning on moving in that direction and we're not going to go ahead with it." However, I think it would have been a great investment and that would have helped on the east side of Lake Couchiching at that point.

I also want to point out that I've got a colleague—a friend of mine, a constituent—who is actually out in Calgary right now, but he heard about my colleague's private member's bill. He just writes this little note:

"Garfield,

"Have you seen anything on this bill which seeks wider paved shoulders for us cyclists? Does it have a snowball's chance at QP?

"I like the idea of it helping cycling tourism—something that could take off in our area and really help the economy. Just look at the Niagara region cycle tour industry or Vermont, France, Italy, California the list is ever growing. Trek tours are very prestigious—I rode Texas with them and met Lance Armstrong—they have a program in Niagara now that sells worldwide." He just points out that he's asking about this from the tourism aspect.

I think, if we're sincere about these types of things, we've seen some really good private members' legislation here this afternoon: the two on the food banks, and, of course, this one here I think is an excellent bill as well. I really hope the House will support this today and not just pretend it doesn't exist and let it go into a black hole forever. Let's get it out there. Let's get this thing over to a committee and get the House leaders to agree to take it forward so that we can save lives and so we can promote tourism. This shouldn't be something that's left to an election time or a point where somebody's going to try to campaign on it. This is something that's a winner for everybody in Ontario right now. It's a long-term project that's good for everyone, and I just thank my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka for having the foresight and the thoughtfulness behind this to bring this bill forward. I think it's very positive for the economy, for public safety, for the cycling industry and for the people who like to walk and run along the sides of our highways.

I know, myself, I walk every day of my life. I walk at least an hour. Down in Toronto here, of course, I walk on sidewalks, but up home I have to walk on gravel shoulders. I don't have a problem with that, but I can tell you that the people who bike, they certainly would have a benefit in the asphalt shoulders. So I'd ask everyone to support this legislation today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to lend my voice in support, as the critic for transportation in the New Demo-

cratic Party, to Mr. Miller's bill—the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I'm not supposed to say his name, but his riding.

I've got to take the opportunity, because we're talking about paved shoulders, to, I guess, give a plea to members in the House. If you're going to pave shoulders, can you give us the unpaved ones—put them onto highways and send them up north? Because in many of the communities that I represent, we don't even have roads, so it would be really appreciated when it comes to building roads in this province if the government of Ontario could turn its attention to actually building roads in places across Ontario that currently don't have roads and find themselves as fly-in communities.

In a lot of the communities that I represent, the only way that you're able to get anything in, quite frankly, is by barge in the summer, if the channel hasn't been silted, but by and large, everything is flown in by planes. It really adds to the cost of absolutely everything. Building a house, buying a box of cereal, buying food for your family, anything—it's extremely expensive.

If you're living in communities like Kasabonika, Attawapiskat, Fort Severn or Peawanuck, you're going to pay quite a bit of money for very basic essentials, things like milk, eggs, diapers for your baby; all those kinds of things you're going to pay through the nose for, and the reason for that is there is no real transportation infrastructure there.

I say this in jest to my friend, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka: I just want to say, yes, I will support your bill, but I'd be remiss if I didn't put on the record that we have a long way to go in this province towards making sure that all Ontarians have an ability to share in the transportation infrastructure that we all use in northern and in southern Ontario. So I would say that.

On the issue of road safety that the member raises, he's 100% right, and I think all of us can agree on this one. There are more and more people now who are using bikes for touring. I see them on Highway 11, I see them on Highway 655 as I'm driving around my riding: people who are using their bicycles as a means of being able to have a little holiday; people from different parts of the province and people from different parts of the country.

In some places, paved highways make perfectly good sense in order to ensure that in the end we're able to make safe both people who are on their bicycles—and, in some cases, pedestrians—and make it safe for drivers as well.

So I just want to say, as the transportation critic for the New Democratic Party, we will support this particular motion and hope that the government sees its way to being able to support it as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Mr. Miller, has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Norm Miller: I want to thank those who participated. I'd first of all actually like to thank Penelope Yu, who's a University of Waterloo co-op student who's been working in my office the last few weeks and did

some research on finding some of the facts and figures for this. Thank you, Penelope.

I'd like to thank those who participated in the debate today: the member from Trinity–Spadina and the member from Algoma–Manitoulin. He referred to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I did talk to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and he told me he was in support of this. He mentioned Highway 6 running through his riding. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke; the member from Parkdale–High Park, who I know has another private member's bill as well; the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, and thank you for getting those extra facts on that I didn't have time to get into my presentation; the members for Simcoe North and Timmins–James Bay.

There are other jurisdictions that are a little bit in front of us, I would say: places like Quebec, BC and some of the US states. I think this bill, which would require highways that are designated by regulation when they're rebuilt to have at least a metre of paved shoulder where practical, just makes sense for many of the reasons that have been outlined: safety, opportunity to ride, health improvements for individuals, safety for drivers, maintenance savings and benefits to the environment. So I would just ask for support from all members.

I also want to thank those who helped me out with my news conference last week: Eleanor McMahon from Share the Road Coalition and Margaret Casey from Muskoka Trails Council. I also want to thank Dan Andrews, director of TransCanada Trail Ontario, for being here today to watch the proceedings.

Thank you very much, and I ask for your support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has expired. It's now time to vote. I'll ask the members to take their seats.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll deal first with ballot item number 28, standing in the name of Mr. Rinaldi.

Mr. Rinaldi has moved private member's notice of motion number 46. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

TAXATION AMENDMENT ACT (FOOD BANK DONATION TAX CREDIT FOR FARMERS), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES IMPÔTS (CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT AUX AGRICULTEURS POUR DON À UNE BANQUE ALIMENTAIRE)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 29.

Mr. Bailey has moved second reading of Bill 78, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide a tax credit to farmers for donating to Ontario food banks certain agricultural products they produced.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I move that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Agreed? So ordered.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
AND HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT
AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT
DES VOIES PUBLIQUES
ET DES TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 30.

Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, has moved second reading of Bill 100, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Norm Miller: I move that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the standing committee? Agreed? So ordered.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day. Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): That's next Wednesday at 9 a.m. So if you're here on Monday, blame me.

The House adjourned at 1621.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

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Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York—Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough—Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches—East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London—Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland—Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga—Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth—Wellington	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
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Deuxième session, 39^e législature

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

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Mercredi 22 septembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 22 September 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 22 septembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Buddhist prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY TAX CREDIT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR LES ACTIVITÉS DES ENFANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 16, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit/ Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour les activités des enfants.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my pleasure and an honour to talk about this bill. At the outset, this bill is not going to do any harm, so New Democrats are going to support it.

But I have to say we are perplexed, we are puzzled and we wonder why this bill is here in the first place. Surely, when the government was looking at exemptions, this should have been one of them. When the government was looking at fast food and hamburgers, when you were looking at kids stuffing their face at McDonald's and eating all the wrong foods, you thought that was a great thing to exempt. When you were looking at soft drinks and all—great things to exempt. But when it came to this—oh, no, this was not going to be exempted.

Now you've heard parents screaming, you've heard kids not being able to play and you've come up with a \$50 maximum tax credit. I guess some families will want the \$50, some families will welcome the \$50; \$50 may make a difference to some kids being enrolled in sports or music or something else. So we are going to vote for it.

But if you think it's reasonable to tax children's activity in the first place, then you should come up and say that. I'd like to hear someone from the government explain why this was not exempted in the first place. I'd like you to explain why the \$50 tax credit is going to be approximately half of what parents are spending on HST. We know that if you spend \$500 putting your child into a

hockey team—any example would do, but a hockey team right off the top of my head—they're going to pay approximately \$40 in new HST. That's what they're going to spend just on that: one child, \$40 on HST, which they didn't pay before the HST came into effect. So you want to give some of that back.

We have a report. A recent study by a leading HST researcher, David Murrell, suggests that Ontario families spend \$1.8 billion on now taxable recreational programs and facilities and that the McGuinty government's 8% tax means that families will be paying \$148 million in new taxes, double the amount of the \$75 million that's proposed in this bill that the McGuinty Liberals are spending on their fitness tax credit. So families, again, are losers; they are losers in the overall scheme of things.

We have seen what's happening across this province in terms of the HST. Government numbers in opinion polls have gone down. People are starting to get very angry when they see HST coming up on their bills. In British Columbia, which has recall legislation, you are starting to see a government very nervous and worried as people are upset because they have to wait a whole year, or more than a year, until the time roughly of the next Ontario election, to vote to get rid of the HST in that province. People don't like it. They don't like what's happening to them; they don't like the costs of it. I'll tell you, what is happening in British Columbia, which is well documented because of the recall legislation, is also happening here. It may be more subdued, but when you go around and talk to your constituents, you are going to see that the government big sell on this new tax is not working. It's not working because people are unhappy with what they're being forced to pay. They are unhappy at all those little things, such as their children getting into hockey games or figure skating or piano lessons, now being taxed, and they will be unhappy in spite of this bill.

I have to say that I think the thing they're most unhappy about is not necessarily the 8% on this expense. What they are most unhappy about and what we've received so many calls on is the 8% that's being taxed on to the electricity bill. I ask my friends opposite—the HST is causing all kinds of grief. It's causing grief to children's minor sports, but it's especially causing grief to families when they get their electricity bill, their heating bills, their natural gas bills, their oil bills, their gas bills when they are filling up the car. The HST on electricity is probably the most heinous of the lot, because consumers are now paying HST on such a broad range of goods and services. It's not just HST on the five cents or eight cents

per kilowatt hour that they are using; they are paying HST on such things as the retirement of the debt. This is the first time I have ever seen a tax put on debt retirement in the history of this province. This government has chosen to tell people, "You are in debt." I understand why we're in debt: We went big, we went nuclear and we lost a bundle. We all understand what happened. But now, ordinary citizens are being forced to pay HST on the retirement of that debt in order that the government—

0910

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Beaches–East York, I'm sure that you're going to tie this in to the child tax credit within about the next 30 seconds.

Mr. Michael Prue: Absolutely. Mr. Speaker, you anticipated my very move. I'm talking about the HST, and then I'm going to go back into the HST as it relates to children and tax credits. But I'm just pointing this out as an example—probably the most heinous example—of where the HST has gone wrong so that ordinary people are now having to pay for things that it's simply not right that they pay for.

To bring it back to this issue, it is not right that families in the first place are having to pay HST on children's programs. It is absolutely not right, and it wasn't right in the first place. Again, I bring it back to a statement I made at the opening of this debate here today: The government saw fit to take the HST off such things as fast foods and things that are potentially harmful for young children—in fact, probably harmful for all of us—and yet, they left that same HST on children's programs.

A couple of points that I would like to make here: The first is that the families, in order to get this money, are going to have to jump through hoops. They're going to have to fill out forms, they're going to have to get records, they're going to have to get a lot of things. That need not have happened. Had the government in its wisdom not taxed this in the first place, there would have been nothing to do; there would have been absolutely nothing to do. But now, families are going to be forced to fill out forms, families are going to have to keep records, families are going to be limited in terms of how much they claim—because the maximum is \$50 per child per year, and that doesn't go very far in terms of expenditures on \$500. Anyone who has a child on a hockey team, anyone who has a child registered in any number of programs will know that \$500 of expenditure does not go very far. Yet, the return on this is only a maximum of \$50. In fact, for some of the cheaper programs, they're not even going to see that \$50; they're going to see considerably less—that is, programs that are often run by municipalities, church groups and the like are going to see even less.

There's the whole jumping through hoops, the whole keeping of all these records that I'm sure is going to make people angry. Better had this government in the first place simply not put the tax on children's recreational and sports programs.

We know we want our children to be healthy. We know that the Minister of Health Promotion stands in this place, whenever the opportunity gives itself, and talks about children and the opportunity and the desire that parents have to keep their children healthy. We also know that the Minister of Health Promotion talks about obesity and that kind of thing, and what the government is attempting to do. Yet here we have a program where parents are going to have to jump through hoops.

We also know a University of Alberta study showed that the high costs of these activities meant that upper- and middle-income families were twice as likely to submit the claim as poorer families. So what we have here is a sop to the middle class, the middle class who were particularly angry at the HST. We know who is going to make this claim. Is it going to be families from Regent Park, where I grew up? I don't think so. Maybe they will; I hope they do. But it's going to be primarily middle-class, upper-middle-class and rich families who know how to take advantage of this, who have accountants, who have lawyers, who have everything else, who have the wherewithal to keep their receipts and the monies that are being spent.

The University of Alberta set it out very well: This is not a fair tax, and it's not a fair remuneration. It is more likely to be taken up by those who already have more money than by those who have less.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: I can hear my friend from Algoma muttering, but I can't make out what he's trying to say because he's muttering so badly. If he has something important to say, I wish he'd say it right out loud.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: He's muttering again. I still can't hear what he has to say. I'm sure it's of importance only to himself.

Hon. James J. Bradley: We're not talking about the 15% in NDP Nova Scotia.

Mr. Michael Prue: Oh, I can hear the honourable minister a little better. He's much more clear and articulate when he mutters. I thank him for his interjection, but I reject it all the same.

We also know that families are in particularly tight circumstances these days. Unemployment remains spectacularly high. We know that the cost of living and taxes have increased, for some families exponentially, and we know that they struggle to do a great many things. I am extremely worried, and I think most of us need to be worried, that families will find less and less money to put their children through sports and other activities, because those are some of the less-than-necessities that have to be met. You have to first pay your hydro bill; you have to pay your mortgage; you have to buy food; you have to send your child to school, and you have expenses related to that; you have all of the families that are fundraising in schools these days because there isn't enough money coming forward from the government. When it comes down to it, one ought to be worried about the number of children who will actually participate in these activities

in the first place, never mind getting the rebate. The family has to first of all come up with the money in order to make sure the children have the opportunity. Where is the government on all of this? If you have the money, if you can send your child, then you can get a rebate in the magnificent sum of \$50.

To bring it all back together—and I may not use my whole 20 minutes here, because this is a pretty thin little bill—we have a government here that had choices to make. We have a government that could have done the right thing and exempted children's activities from the HST. We have a government that decided not to do that. But then they went out and they saw and felt the political heat around all of this. They felt the political heat because people were upset. They know that activities that people enjoy doing cost considerably more—we know that children were particularly vulnerable—and they came up with a \$50 tax credit.

I had the opportunity today to read the clipping service, and Christina Blizzard from the Toronto Sun wrote a very good column. It is slightly divergent away from this, but not too much, because one of the activities that many adults enjoy doing, me in particular, is fishing. She had a whole column about people who would travel from outside of the province to come to northern Ontario, to the area around Kenora, to the pristine lakes, to enjoy fishing. It was found out—and her column is all about the HST—how this outdoor activity, that was enjoyed not so much by children but by adults, is now becoming very, very difficult and less likely to occur in this province than elsewhere. She talked about people coming from the United States who found that the additional 13% HST was onerous—an additional 8% from the province that was onerous—and took us out of the league, so that people would now choose to stay in the United States and perhaps go fishing in Minnesota. She also talked about some of our brothers and sisters from other parts of Canada and how it now made more sense for people living in Manitoba, who had once come to enjoy outdoor recreational activities in Ontario—they are now more likely to choose to go to Saskatchewan.

0920

The same thing holds true for children's activities. If the activities in those border communities, be they on the border with Quebec, be they on the border with Manitoba or, potentially, even be they on the border with the United States, are that much cheaper without the equivalent of an HST on children's activities in those places, then I would suggest that that is where parents are going to take their children as well.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: I can hear more muttering now, coming from the Minister of Community and Social Services, but I can't make out what she's saying. If it's important, please say it loudly.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Quebec has had HST for the past 10 years.

Mr. Michael Prue: She's telling me that Quebec has had HST for the past 10 years. Yes, they have, but

they've lowered it, and I'm not sure that they have put it—

Interjection: They lowered it twice.

Interjection: To what?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. Michael Prue: I think there's lots of argument there, but I leave that for my colleagues, if they—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I agree with the member for Parkdale–High Park: If you have something to say, you'll be given an opportunity to do that.

The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Mr. Michael Prue: For Beaches–East York?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Beaches–East York; I'm sorry.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member from Parkdale–High Park sits beside me, and she is usually far more eloquent—I think you can tell the difference that way.

In any event, other provinces do what other provinces want to do. Manitoba has chosen not to go down this road; Quebec, as the minister rightly pointed out, went down this road many years ago. But they have wonderful programs for children, and I have not heard any screams coming out of those places in terms of the opportunities available for children, or indeed the opportunities for parents to have full-day child care. They've had it for many years, and all the opportunities that children can avail themselves of in that province are far different from anything this government has been able to come up with.

In closing, I think that we, as New Democrats, have no alternative but to vote for this bill. We have no alternative because \$50 in the pockets of families is better than nothing at all. But we have to ask those same families, and anybody watching this on television: Would it not have been better in the first place for the government to recognize the importance of children's health, to recognize the importance of recreational activities and to have done at least the same thing for recreational health that they did for McDonald's hamburgers?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you for the opportunity to add a few comments to those of the previous speaker from Beaches–East York. I would have to say that this bill, and the government's plan, are to try to do everything they can to help young children and families in Ontario. I can tell you, as a former soccer coach for close to 17 years, working with young children in house leagues and competitive soccer, that this is definitely an opportunity to help those families with some of their costs. I certainly will be supporting it, and I'm glad my colleague from Beaches–East York will be supporting it.

But I think there's something very obvious that has to be noted. Unlike the federal children's fitness tax credit, which is non-refundable and only applies to income tax owing, this government chose to make it a credit that everyone will receive, especially low-income earners in Ontario, whom this government has been trying over

time to help, year after year, if you look at all the programs we've brought in, in the last couple of years, one of them being the Ontario child benefit program.

The whole revamp of that system has put more money into lower-income families. Full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds is certainly helping low-income families, with their kids being in school all day and reducing their costs in having to pay for daycare. If you look at what we're doing, I think it's very positive, and families are going to welcome this.

The one additional thing you need to note is that this particular credit does not apply to organized sports only. It applies to activities for young people like music lessons, language classes and dance classes. I think this is a very positive thing on the government's part.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I give credit to the member from Beaches–East York for pointing out the trivialness of this bill, the knee-jerk reaction, you know, switching the channel. In fact, I know that in the Minister of Finance's riding, the Windsor Star posted an article that reads, "Cynical PR move." If you put that into context, I think Andrea Horwath summed it up very nicely as well: "The announcement comes two months after the introduction of the despised harmonized sales tax," and she says, "What would be the best is if the government had thought more carefully about the harmonized tax in the first place."

Clearly, we on this side understand. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has said this is a tax on people that was never talked about and never planned; it was just a tax grab. And our research has said it's about \$732 or more a year per family.

What does this \$50 mean? Let's put it in the context of the bill—the member from Beaches–East York did point that out. If you spend \$500 and you do the tax, 13%, that comes out to \$65 in tax. That's money out of your pocket. It's actually \$500 plus \$65. And no expense would be just \$500; it could be \$550 or \$600. If you spend less than that, you don't qualify. But if you're already spending, or giving Premier McGuinty, an additional \$65, they're saying, keep your receipts and file your taxes, which is more red tape. But some of the receipts may not qualify. If it is a specific "instruction," as it says in the bill, it doesn't include hotel costs, travel costs or anything like that. None of that is covered. So I don't think it does anything for families at all.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Let's name this child tax credit for what it is. First of all, to correct what my friend from Scarborough–Rouge River said, or implied, it's \$50 maximum. You don't get \$50 over and over again on programs your child is enrolled in. It's \$50 maximum.

For parents in my community, who probably spend, on average, over \$1,000 on child programs every year, it doesn't come close to matching the HST burden even for them. Let's face it: This is a gnat-sized corrective for an

elephant-sized mistake, which is the HST. As my friend from Durham said, this is a public relations move that will have little to no bearing on parents across this province.

A woman from my riding was talking to me about her hydro bill. She said, "How ridiculous. The government announces a \$50 credit at the same time that I'm opening my hydro bill to an extra \$100," an extra \$100 on one bill alone—one bill alone. Another member from my riding who runs a small business and also has children said that his hydro bill now represents a huge portion of his profits because of changes this government has made with their not-so-smart meters and their HST. In return, they get \$50 back.

This is an insult to hard-working families across the province. This is a subtle way—maybe a not-so-subtle way—of saying, "Oops, we made a mistake. We didn't look at the HST well enough. We didn't look at the implications of the HST well enough. Now we're trying to claw back some of that mistake." It's too little, too late. Too little and far, far too late for the majority of families across this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm so pleased to have a chance to talk this morning and bring a little bit of reality back to the conversation we're having here. I would suggest that the members opposite who are saying this is meaningless to Ontario families are totally out of touch with Ontario families. This is \$50 per child indexed with inflation, refundable to families, added to the \$75 per child that the federal government provides.

I look at the programs in my community, where families line up, get on the phone early in the morning to get on the programs that are offered by Toronto Parks and Recreation. I brought some of those programs here today. Let's be in touch with what families register their kids in.

0930

Islington Community School offers a program through Toronto Parks and Rec, Kids in the Kitchen: \$31 for nine weeks for kids nine to 12 to go from 5:30 to 7 on a Wednesday night to learn about healthy cooking and to be part of that program. It's a great program, and when you're paying \$31 for nine weeks, to a maximum of 50 bucks at the end of the year—and the program that you're registering your children in is a whole new program. You get to put your child in one additional program. Ball hockey on Saturday mornings at Islington Community for kids nine to 12 years old, from 12 to 1—again, \$31 for nine weeks of those programs.

This \$50 return allows you, as a parent, to say, "Do you know what? I'm going to put my child in one extra program because that's the amount that I will get refundable to me." These programs are also not subject to HST because they're municipally provided.

I think we need to be clear about what we're doing here. We're in tune and in touch with families who want

to put their kids in programs and we're giving them some financial ability to be able to do more of that. That's really meaningful to parents in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Beaches–East York, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank the members from Scarborough–Rouge River, Durham, Parkdale–High Park and the Minister of Children and Youth Services for the comments.

I want to talk first of all about the member from Scarborough–Rouge River. He said that this is a credit that everyone is going to receive, and yes, it is a credit. But he wasn't listening, I don't believe, to what I had to say. You have to fill out forms and other things to get the credit. We know from past experience, from the University of Alberta's study, that people tend to apply for these credits who are better educated, more well-off, and that poorer communities—although poorer people can apply for these credits—are far less likely to do so for two reasons: first, because they may not understand it as well in some cases, but the second and more important one is they're not likely to participate to the same level because they can't afford the amounts of money that are going out for recreational programs. To spend \$500 for a child, if you're a parent in Regent Park, Parkdale or Crescent Town, is an enormous sum of money for a family that barely makes ends meet. So to get the \$50 tax credit, you would have to have spent the \$500 at the outset. They simply don't have it.

The second thing is the Minister of Children and Youth Services. She gave two examples of wonderful programs that are being offered by the city of Toronto in Islington. One of them, I think, is a great program teaching kids how to cook healthy meals. The city's charging \$31. How much tax credit is going to be available for this? I would think none, because it's a city of Toronto program, but even if there is something, it's to a maximum of 10%. They're going to get \$3.10 back. What good is that going to do—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me and giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important bill. The Ontario Children's Activity Tax Credit Act, 2010, as proposed, would give an up to 10% of \$500 tax credit per child and an up to 10% of over \$1,000 for children with disabilities tax credit.

Let me say a couple of points at the outset. What I want to do eventually is sort of parse all the different elements of this tax credit, because I think there's a lot of confusion being discussed here.

First of all, I think we should not trivialize any help we can give our families, especially our parents. Every little bit helps. I don't think anybody is claiming that this is going to result in a big windfall for our families—of course not—but it's substantive help. It's going to directly help parents with kids to ensure that their kids

can be involved in various physical and non-physical activities.

The other thing I wanted to make a point of is that we should not demean individuals who happen to be on low incomes by insinuating they don't have the capacity or means to understand how a tax credit could work, that they somehow are able to file an income tax return every single year and not take advantage of a credit like this. I think those kinds of ideas are not appropriate. Just because somebody is on a low income does not mean that they do not have the capacity to take advantage of various government programs and various government tax credits that are available to them. I take exception to those comments that were made.

Let's look at this tax credit closely. I have divided it into five different parts. First of all, the uniqueness of this particular tax credit is that it applies to both physical activities and non-physical activities. The comparison that is often given is the federal government's tax credit, which is up to \$75, but that only applies to physical activities like soccer, hockey, floor hockey, dodge ball etc.—those types of activities. This provincial tax credit goes beyond. It covers all that is covered under the federal government's tax credit, and it adds on top of it. So that's a significant amount. It's \$75 plus \$50, and I want to make that very clear. It's not one or the other; it's both.

But it also applies to non-physical activities, because not all parents are sending their children to hockey, soccer or some other physical activity. Some of them are sending them for music lessons and for language classes, so those types of activities are also included in this particular tax credit, and I think it's a significant point.

I'll give you some examples of non-physical activities that are covered under this credit: cadets; chess; choir; cooking for kids, as the minister mentioned; dance; drama; first aid courses; Girl Guides; leadership development; lifeguarding; musical instrument lessons; and the list goes on and on. That's fairly expansive in nature in terms of coverage.

I know I've got, for example, the Ottawa School of Speech and Drama in my riding of Ottawa Centre, which never qualified. Those parents who sent their children to the Ottawa School of Speech and Drama were not able to qualify for the federal tax credit, nor will they in the future unless the federal government changes its mind. But once this bill comes into force, if it's passed by this Legislature, they will be able to get a tax credit for their activities. Up to now, they were getting nothing. That is, I think, a very important distinction.

I can tell you, from speaking to parents in my riding of Ottawa Centre, that they are very appreciative of this particular change. They are very appreciative of the fact that we are not covering just physical activities but that we are going beyond and also covering non-physical activities.

The second point, and this is a technical point—and it's important because I think members from the opposition can muddy the water, so to speak, on this particular

point—is that this is a refundable tax credit. Now, the question arises of what the difference is between a non-refundable tax credit and a refundable tax credit. Well, here is the difference: A federal tax credit is a non-refundable tax credit, which means that the only time you will get that money back, the \$75 tax credit, is when you owe taxes. If you owe taxes to the federal government, they will make an adjustment by the amount owing for the tax credit. If you don't owe tax, you get zilch, nothing, zero.

That creates a differentiation between those who are on middle or high income versus those who are on low income. This is where we should be talking about the differences between those families who live on low incomes—who, at the end of the day, do not owe any taxes and cannot take advantage of the federal tax credit because it's non-refundable—versus those who earn middle incomes and higher incomes, because they owe taxes so they get some money back.

Let's contrast that: This particular provincial proposed tax credit, which applies to both physical and non-physical activities, is refundable in nature, which means that it does not matter for a family whether they owe taxes or not. They will still get money. They will still get a cheque from the provincial government, which means that if you're a low-income family and at the end of the day you do not owe any taxes to the provincial government, you will still be able to take advantage and either get \$50 or \$100, depending on the circumstance of your child, from the provincial government. That is a very significant distinction because we are not creating classes; we are not distinguishing between various income levels. We're helping all Ontarians regardless of their income—a very important point. This is not a subtle distinction. This is a very important discussion and I do not hear the opposition speaking about that.

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The third point I want to make to distinguish this particular tax credit: that there is a higher amount that is available for children with disabilities. The eligible amount is \$1,000, so it's a tax credit of up to \$100 for children with any disability, and the age—the definition of what a child is—is higher as well; it is 18 years. In the case of kids with no disability, the age limitation is 16 years. So not only is the age for disabled kids longer, at 18 years, but the amount is higher as well. I think the thinking there is that clearly, children who have disabilities tend to have higher needs. They need services that tend to be more expensive, and government wants to do its part—modest in nature, no doubt about it—to help those parents who have kids with disabilities. So that is another very important distinction we have to keep in mind.

Point number four that I want to make in this regard is that this tax credit, if passed by this esteemed House, will apply retroactively. It will apply as of January 1, 2010. So parents who are incurring expenses this year should keep their receipts handy in a file somewhere so that they can apply for the tax credit.

My experience with all kinds of credits—and I think we all have experienced filing our income tax returns. We used to do it in paper form. I remember doing that, up to a few years ago, on paper, and now I do it with various services on the Internet. Some people have help they get from outside. These tax credits are easy to apply for because most of them just apply automatically. They do the calculations fairly automatically once certain criteria are determined, because you have to state, as basic information, whether you're married or not, whether you have children, or how old your children are. You have to put in certain information about that, so the rest of the calculation kicks in. The most you may have to do, probably, in this regard is check off a box and of course, if asked, provide receipts. When you're filing your income tax return online, obviously you do not file any documentation unless the Canada Revenue Agency comes back to you to prove that your child was enrolled in music lessons or hockey lessons etc. So it's not going to be that overly cumbersome as is being suggested, as is the case with many other tax credits, and it applies retroactively to January 1, 2010, for this year.

I'm really hopeful—and I'm sensing from all the members that they will be supporting this bill—that once it is passed through this Legislature, parents keep those receipts handy so that they can take advantage of this tax credit this year.

The last point: I think a very important distinction that applies in this bill which I want to highlight is that everybody is making a point that this is only \$50 or \$100 and that's it's not that much money. The government has made it very clear that that amount will rise annually based on cost of living. It's indexed. The \$50 or \$100 is the amount which is in the first year, but every year, based on the cost-of-living indexation, this amount will rise. So we will see it reflective of the cost of living, which we all have to bear as we live. I think that is a very important point as well.

I want to talk about the idea that somehow this tax credit—because that's the impression one gets—is something we're just doing in isolation; there's nothing else that government is doing to make sure that our children remain healthy. We know that is not an absolute truth. The government has been doing a lot of things to ensure that our families have the opportunity to ensure that their kids remain healthy and our children have the opportunity to ensure that they are active and healthy.

We know that in Canada, child obesity is a big issue. Just a few days ago, I was listening to some analyses and documentaries on CBC Radio talking about childhood obesity in Canada and comparing it to some other countries around the world. We need to do everything in our capacity to ensure that we allow opportunities for our children to be active. Now, we have done a few things in our school system alone to ensure that our kids are more active. I don't know where the previous governments were on those issues. For example, the most simple thing—I can't believe we never had that before—is 20 minutes of mandatory physical activity in our elementary

schools. We never had that. I can't understand why our kids were not required, since they go to school every day, to have some mandatory physical activity. I mean, this is where we teach our students; this is where we educate our kids; this is where we develop good habits in them. What a perfect place to ensure that they get into the habit of having some sort of regular activity. I'm sure all of us members have our routines, where we try to maintain our health by engaging in physical activity—some probably more than others, but we do our best. So by legislation, we have taken that step of ensuring that kids have 20 minutes of daily physical activity in elementary schools. Now it's mandatory—a very important point. And guess what? There are no costs associated with that. Those kids are going as part of a publicly funded education system and they're being helped to develop the right set of habits that will help them as they grow up as members of society.

The other thing which I think this Legislature dealt with in this Parliament—I believe that was in 2008 or 2009—was to ban trans fats from vending machines, school cafeterias and tuck shops—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Ottawa Centre, I'm sure that we're all interested in those things, but that you want to bring that back to the context of the bill that's before us this morning.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: And I will do so, Mr. Speaker, in 30 seconds.

We want to make sure that we are giving our children all the right sets of opportunities, like this children's activity tax credit is doing, to ensure that they continue to live a healthy life. We want to make sure that when they go to school, they are not eating foods that are unhealthy for them, because it is about creating and developing the right kinds of habits to ensure that our kids are living healthy lives. Through this tax credit, we are ensuring that parents have the opportunities available to them—again, modest in nature, no doubt about it—to ensure that they are helping their children by providing them the right kinds of sets of activities.

All in all, I think this is a good bill. This is a bill in the right direction. From a tax policy point of view, I'm hearing some comments about how things could have been made exempt from HST. I think those who have looked into the tax policy know that one of the best ways to deal with consumption taxation is to provide targeted tax credits, because that allows incentives to invest money in a particular area, and by providing a children's activity tax credit, we are rewarding those parents, those individuals who are actually ensuring that their kids are enrolled in physical and non-physical activities.

I urge all members to support this important legislation. I think it's a step in the right direction. It ensures that our parents have the resources necessary to continue to support their families. I know in my riding of Ottawa Centre parents are quite happy about it. I've received that feedback, and they encourage me to do more tax credits which are specific in nature to them.

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The other thing I want to highlight from a tax point of view is that it covers a lot of services, a lot of activities, which have no HST; for example, music lessons. There is no HST on music lessons, while this tax credit will apply to that.

I think we need to be very clear to ensure that, be it services being provided by municipalities or a for-profit group, when it comes to helping our parents, we are not distinguishing between incomes and we are not distinguishing between what kind of activity. We are making sure that there is some directed help that is available to parents.

We'll hopefully continue to work together as elected public servants for the people of Ontario by providing targeted incentives to help our families.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to hearing the views of my colleagues.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened to the member from Ottawa Centre carefully, and I probably don't disagree with a lot of it. I think the stress and importance that he puts on it is a bit exaggerated.

Nonetheless, here's a suggestion, and I mean this quite sincerely and humbly: What they should do is extend this tax credit to seniors.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Tai chi.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, exactly. The member from Peterborough is quite right. If people are participating in programs that are good for their health and fitness—mentally and physically, I suspect—they should be entitled, because our health care system is struggling under the burden of an aging population. We all know that, and we're not sure just how we're going to deal with it. But the point here is that it's kind of tax discrimination. Young children—I would encourage them to have an active lifestyle, whether it's soccer or ballet. It's just being active that's important, intellectually as well as physically, and I would say the same for seniors who are dealing with Alzheimer's.

So I make a positive suggestion here this morning. There are a couple of ministers in the House, and I hope that they're listening and that they'll take this. And I would ask for public hearings, even if it's just for a morning, so that the public—rather than introducing these tax changes without consulting with the public. This is another problem with your eco tax. I was speaking this morning with the former Minister of the Environment, who was quickly moved out of that portfolio right after the introduction of the eco tax, and it sounds like they're going to introduce that again. I would say that what they should do is consult with the people of Ontario.

The member from Ottawa Centre is a young, very active president of the Liberal Party. He's very active and eager to be in cabinet. Take back the suggestion of adding it for seniors. That's a positive thing that our leader, Tim Hudak, suggested at our caucus meeting, that

it's tax discrimination. So there's one way of improving it, we suggest to you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the honourable member and what he had to say. He took some umbrage at the fact that I had said that the poor are less likely to apply for these credits than people who are not poor. The reality is that that's exactly what happens. One needs to look only at the Alberta report on these types of exemptions, written by Mr. Murrell, to know that that's exactly what happens. But one need not even go to Alberta. One has to go even back to the 20 or 30 years of all of the social reports that have been tabled in this House, all pointing exactly in the same direction: People who do not have the same kind of opportunity, people who don't sometimes have the same educational opportunities, the same backgrounds, are far less likely to avail themselves of credits such as this. People who are new Canadians who don't know about the availability of the credits—lots of people don't get them to the same extent that many middle-class families will be eligible. That's the reality of what I was trying to say. Why he takes umbrage at something that is a known social and proven fact is beyond me.

The second thing: He talks about having children eat healthy food. He talks—he tried to talk, before the Speaker rightly told him to get back on topic. But the whole question, and I raised this—I ask him perhaps if he would comment on why this government thought it so important to take the 8% additional HST off fast foods, things that are not healthy for children, and didn't think it was important to have children's programs exempt in the first place.

This is a sop. This is \$50 maximum in most cases. Parents are going to spend more than that on the HST on the programs all by themselves.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I was listening very carefully to the presentation done by the member for Ottawa Centre.

With this bill, the people really got the answer they were looking for. I have to tell you that at the present time, over 1.1 million Ontarian families will benefit from this tax credit.

I have to tell you that during the sessions that I was giving on the HST, one of the questions that was brought to my attention—a gentleman from the municipality of Russell came to me, and he was a little upset about the HST at the time. He said, "It's going to cost me \$800 more to register my kids." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I'm the president of minor hockey," and I said, "How many hockey players have you got?" He said, "About 300." That amounts to about \$24 with this tax credit today.

We are giving the answer to those families, really, that they were looking for. They will be getting a tax credit with which they will be able to continue having their kids

play any of the sports that are recognized by the provincial government.

When I look at the other benefits that the families are going to get—when we said that some of the families are going to pay more than that for travel and everything, we have to remember that low-income families are getting \$260 per head in the family, so that could amount to quite an amount of money. Also, the first year they get \$1,000. When we explain all that to the people—"Oh, I will be able to continue having my kid registered at the YMCA or dancing lessons."

This is exactly what we're telling the people today, but it's too bad that the people are being scared by the opposition. They're not telling exactly what's going to happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think that this is an initiative worthy of debate in this chamber, one that is going to have far-reaching impacts on children and their families right across the province. That's why I think we need to do it right.

I think I speak to the issue that my colleague from Durham brought up, which is that we should have public consultations on this initiative, whether for half a day or perhaps we might even want to try and engage young families and their children through other means, perhaps through social media or what have you.

The issue here is not that people don't want children's activity increased in the province. Of course every member of this chamber wants that to happen. I guess the question is, what has motivated this bill at this particular time? I look forward to speaking to that at a bit more length when it is our rotation in a few minutes.

I leave my colleagues with that, for the next few minutes: to think about what the motivation is, how we can improve upon it and why we are at the point we're at right now, where people are actually calling this "a cynical PR move," as my colleague for Durham did in this chamber at this time last week.

I look forward to speaking at greater length to this piece of legislation and I look forward to hearing the member from Ottawa Centre complete his remarks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Ottawa Centre, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I do want to thank the members from Durham, Beaches–East York, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and Nepean–Carleton for their comments on my 20 minutes earlier.

A couple of points I just want to make: I think, in terms of motivation, it's as simple as us wanting to collectively do as much as we can to help our families, to ensure that in a very targeted fashion, when it comes to activity of children, we are helping them.

The member from Beaches–East York raised a point about a study from Alberta. I do recall looking at that study and I do recall that the study looked very closely at the non-refundable nature of the federal tax credit. You

are absolute right, sir, that in that case, it does discriminate between those who are middle or high income and those who are low income, because the non-refundable tax credit only applies to those who owe any taxes, whereas there is a very important distinction in this particular bill; that is, it's refundable in nature. So it does not matter how much money you make; it does not matter whether you owe any taxes or not; you will still get the money back. That is an important distinction to make.

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Again, I come to my original point that this is a progressive piece of legislation that is the right way of ensuring that we help families. It's through the means of tax credits to ensure that there's a directed investment being made to those parents who are taking that additional step of ensuring that they're helping their kids in engaging in physical and non-physical activities.

I cannot stress how important it is that we are going beyond just hockey and soccer, which seem to be the mainstay, and also looking at things like music lessons, cadets, Girl Guides and language training, because those types of activities, especially arts activities, are also extremely important because they do help our children have a healthy lifestyle. We need to help those parents who engage in those activities.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this legislation.

This morning, when I was making breakfast for my little girl—she's five years old—she said, "Mummy, will you play with me?" I said, "Mummy has to go give a speech." It was about eight o'clock. She said, "What's the speech about, Mummy?" and I said, "It's the children's activity tax credit." She had a huge smile on her face because it said "children"—one of the few times that this Legislature is actually speaking to that five-year-old demographic that we all desperately want.

She looked at me with this huge smile on her face. I think, ever since we were visited by the tooth fairy a couple of weeks ago, she gets really excited when she thinks she's getting something. So she was very excited. She said, "Do I get that?" and I said, "Yes, you do."

I realized at that point in time that we have to be very careful when we put forward initiatives in this chamber where every little girl, like Victoria, or every little boy whom she will go to school with is eligible. While we're saying "Yes, everybody's eligible," we have to be very careful, because the cost of ballet—I know this because I put her in ballet—has increased as a result of the HST. I know this because she's in ringette, and that cost, as well, has gone up, as has our driving to and from; the cost of our fuel. I know also because she does play soccer, indoor and outdoor, that that has increased as well, and it has all increased beyond \$50.

Hon. John Gerretsen: She's one busy little girl, I tell you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, she's a busy little girl, and I'm fortunate to be able to put her through those programs. I'm very fortunate, and she is fortunate.

But they say in life, children are the great equalizer, and my little girl goes to a public school and she goes to birthday parties. In a lot of cases, the little girls don't know her mom is the MPP, and I want to keep it that way. But I'm going to tell you, when I sometimes go to birthday parties and accompany my little girl, I see single mothers who have done every single thing they can to put a birthday party on for their little girl or their little boy so that they haven't done without. Then I think of those mothers and those children who I know, and I know for a fact that those parents are not thinking about a \$50 tax credit because right now, they cannot afford the registration at all, and I'm speaking from first-hand experience in this chamber. That's why I'm encouraging people from all sides of the political spectrum in this chamber to consider doing what my colleague from Durham has suggested, which is bringing forward public consultation, and not just in Toronto. Because I think of Victoria's little friends and I think of equality.

I also want to bring forward some research by the University of Alberta. This is a \$50 tax credit. The federal tax credit is \$75. The University of Alberta found that "overall"—and I'm quoting this and I'll be happy to provide it to Hansard—"only 15.6% reported that it had increased their children's participation in physical activity programs; however, lower-income families used the tax credit less than wealthier families because they couldn't afford the registration ... for physical activity programs to begin with."

This is a great idea, but we have to make it fair for every child across the province. We can talk about the semantics and talk about the government lines; I'm not interested in that today, because I want every little girl and every little boy in my daughter's senior kindergarten class in Nepean to have equal access to sports and other children's activities, whether that's music or art lessons, whether that's karate, whether that's Cubs.

I think the timing is also suspect. I've often, and many people can point to this, been an advocate for this type of tax credit. In fact, in 2008, I requested that my colleague Toby Barrett, the MPP for Haldimand-Norfolk, put this idea forward. He put forward that—and I'll read this to you. At the time, on page 16, it was entitled, "Health promotion sports tax credit." What I put forward to Toby, who ended up bringing it to the finance committee, was:

"The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs recommends the Minister of Finance, within total planned program spending, create a provincial health promotion sports tax to match or exceed the federal children's fitness tax credit to children in sports under the age of 16."

At the time, the Liberals rejected that.

By the way, Mr. Speaker—I know I'm a little late—my colleague from York-Simcoe will be splitting the time with me.

The reality is that timing is everything. It's sort of what we talk about: In life, timing is everything. Let me say this: Timing is everything. Two years ago, sports registration didn't increase because of the HST. We didn't see skyrocketing deficits, like we do right now at \$20 billion, which is about \$1,500 per family that is a debt burden on top of the \$1,100 or \$1,200 per family they're now paying as a result of the HST. Timing is everything. If we really, truly took this type of initiative seriously in this chamber, we would have adopted this approach during better economic times so that parents who might not be able to bring forward this type of initiative to their child or to be able to pay for this registration could have taken advantage of it earlier on.

My colleague from York-Simcoe will continue to speak to this bill, but I have a simple request to all members of this chamber: Think about those children whose parents cannot afford to send their child to an activity like the ones we're talking about today. One of my colleagues said that anyone who doesn't support this is out of touch. Well, I think it's been very clear that we support this type of initiative, but you have to get it right. If we truly want to get it right, we have to think about those little girls and little boys who we want to have an equal opportunity. Because of the tax burden on their parents, because of the regressive nature of the HST, it is difficult for those families to put their children through sports or any other type of activity. Right now, \$50 might be a lot to some people, but they will never qualify for it unless you do something about the sports registration fees themselves.

Thanks very much. My colleague from York-Simcoe will now speak for me.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for York-Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's a pleasure to have a few minutes in which to make a few comments about this tax credit. There are a couple of things that we need to understand about a tax credit. First of all, you have to file. That's the first thing. Then you have to have kept accurate records in order to have the information to be able to fill in the form to include the proof of registration and participation in one of the approved categories to receive the tax credit. And thirdly—and this is maybe the most important part of a tax credit—you must have the money already in order to have been able to sign up. When we look at the kinds of costs that are associated with many of these children's activities, we're looking at hundreds of hard-earned after-tax dollars that parents put forward to provide these opportunities for their children. So immediately you have, by having a tax credit, funnelled the opportunity down to a much smaller part of the population than at first would appear to be the goal of this piece of legislation. I think that's one of the issues that we need to understand. Of course, in the grand scheme of things, \$50 is a very small percentage of so much of what would be the cost of having children enrolled.

I had an interesting conversation with a coordinator for minor sports in my community. This conversation took place a year ago June, and it demonstrates the kind of thing that we are discussing here. That was the fact that she suddenly realized, frankly well before most people in the community, how the introduction of the HST was going to impact on minor sports. Most people were focusing on the outlay of money on things like gasoline, haircuts and various other things, but she recognized that the rental of the facilities was going to be impacted by the HST. Obviously, parents registering their children for any kind of municipally organized sport, whether it's hockey or soccer—there's still a rental fee and there's still an additional burden.

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So I actually convened a meeting where a number of the associations came together in response to this understanding. One of the things that came out of that was, certainly, the social benefits and the physical benefits that I think we all understand about participation in those community sports teams. But one of the other things was the danger of the tipping point: When is too much too much? The fact is that when parents look at the overall cost, that means, of course, equipment, not just registration, driving costs—that full cost. Where is the tipping point when people feel obliged to withdraw? Is \$50 going to make a difference? Not if they have to put out \$500 or \$1,000. Then \$50 is not necessarily going to make a difference. Instead, the danger is that if too many families feel that they've reached their personal tipping point of not being able to afford this, when is the whole infrastructure of these activities going to feel that pinch? How many families depart from supporting those baseball, soccer and hockey organizations before they, then, feel the pinch because then they have to carry the cost over to fewer and fewer participants? When you start looking at those kinds of dangers of increased costs, the question of the tax credit and how many people it is actually going to keep, literally, in the game, that's what we're really concerned about. That's what we're really talking about: Is it going to be keeping them in the game, or is it going to be seen as a government initiative that has all the elements of gesture politics, where everybody feels good because who is opposed to providing a \$50 tax credit for a worthy cause? Obviously, there are going to be many who see this in the way in which the government is portraying it: that it's a feel-good piece.

It reminds me of a few months ago, when this Legislature debated a similar piece of feel-good legislation. That was the same mechanism again, a tax credit for northern Ontario, recognizing that there were cost burdens in terms of energy. So we as a Legislature then dealt with the proposed legislation—which, obviously, passed—that provided northerners with a tax credit.

This is a recipe, obviously, that the government has found that enables them to go out and talk to northern residents or families and say, "This is what we have provided for you. We are encouraging you. We recognize that there are further costs than perhaps you anticipated."

But I would remind you of the material that has been shared by other members of the House in regard to the fact that—who actually fills out all the forms for the tax credit? Well, we know from the information provided to us already this morning that it's a relatively small number of people who are comfortable with the process of filing and registering and keeping track of all the paperwork that's required for this.

The fact that now we've narrowed—dramatically, I would argue—those people who are eligible by virtue of their participation, certainly that makes it, again, another example of gesture politics, like, "We did our thing. We provided you with this, and now it's up to you."

I also thought it was very interesting that, a moment ago, the member for Ottawa Centre, if I have the right—

Mr. Michael Prue: That's him.

Mrs. Julia Munro: —made an interesting comment about how this amount was going to be indexed to the cost of living. I immediately thought about the fact that the 8% isn't indexed; that was arbitrary. We're going to talk about indexing \$50, but we're not talking about having any kind of recognition of fairness. And when I think of my constituents who are on fixed incomes, I can assure you that that's their biggest issue: "Where's my 8% increase to be able to afford the increase in so many of the necessities and regular problems of my life: my energy costs, my heating, my hydro, my gas? I don't get 8%." And it's certainly not indexed.

So I think that while, on the surface, this is something that obviously no one is going to be opposed to—it provides an opportunity for a part of the population with which, fundamentally, we all agree. But let's us not kid ourselves: Fifty dollars? It's a very small amount, and it's a tax credit.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It being 10:15 of the clock, and pursuant to standing order 8, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In the west members' gallery we have page Nick Jiang's parents, Tony Jiang and Anne Hu. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Johnson: In the west members' gallery I have the mother of page Brigid Goulem. Heather Stauble is here today from my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The mother of Anika Chowdhury, who's our page, is here to witness the proceedings, and we welcome her here today.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: It's my pleasure today. I'm delighted to introduce representatives in attendance from Professional Engineers Ontario—it's their day here today at Queen's Park: the president, Diane L. Freeman; CEO and registrar, Kim Allen; Diane's son Scott Hicks, a high school student in Waterloo; executive intern Laura

Jewell; and Marc-André Simard. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'd be remiss if we didn't recognize Howard Brown, who is visiting us today in the gallery as part of the delegation of engineers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Ms. Ann Hamilton, a member of the Monarchist League of Canada, Toronto branch, seated in the Speaker's gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Visiting Queen's Park today from Saskatchewan is my cousin Theresa Anderson and her husband, Dale Anderson, seated in the Speaker's gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ANNUAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today I've laid upon the table the 2009-10 annual report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario entitled Redefining Conservation.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is for the Premier. Premier, three weeks ago your Minister of Energy said that the Ontario Power Authority was putting together your long-term energy plan and that plan would come out in the early fall. Then this Monday, to the surprise of many, Minister Duguid backtracked, telling the energy sector that you're not going to release that long-term plan until probably well after the next election.

Premier, what changed in three weeks to cause you to backtrack yet again and to keep your real plan from Ontario families until after the next election?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to receive the question and very pleased to speak about our plan. The first piece of good news is that we have a plan. The second piece of good news is that our plan is dedicated to keeping the lights on in the province of Ontario. Thirdly, we are making massive investments in new generation and new transmission. An important part of our focus, as part of our plan, is to invest in energy from renewables: the wind, sun, biomass and the like. That has the additional benefit of creating a whole new industry here in the province of Ontario which is creating new jobs for Ontarians. Ultimately, we are going to be a powerful manufacturing base to export to the rest of North America. That's all part of a comprehensive, long-term plan to make sure we keep the lights on here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, with all due respect—back to the Premier—nobody buys that line anymore.

Seven years of chaos, dithering and delay: I remind the Premier that back in 2006, Hansard for June 20 shows that they were all set to release their long-term energy plan with then-Energy Minister George Smitherman. You boasted that you had five rounds of consultations, including town halls, listening on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry. You had a website. You had public hearings by the OPA. All that time, all that money developing your plan, and you ripped it up four years ago, and you're backtracking once again.

Premier, what's with all this chaos at your Ministry of Energy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I'm delighted to speak to this. I think my honourable colleague, in fact, understands that there is in place a 20-year long-term plan. I think he also understands that we're required to revisit that plan every three years and modify it in accordance with our changed view of the future outlook. That's exactly what we're doing.

I will remind my honourable colleague as well that we are not in a panic mode the way that their government was. Their long-term plan, so to speak, at the time when we were experiencing brownouts, at the time when we were risking big blackouts, was to put in place diesel generators in our cities. That was their plan to deal with our electricity shortage in the province of Ontario.

We have a solid, reliable, comprehensive, intelligent long-term plan, and Ontarians can go to bed having confidence we've got a plan. We're going to keep the lights on.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, while Ontario families are coping with spiking energy bills, Dalton McGuinty has turned backtracking into an art form. You backtracked four years ago. You're backtracking again today. Premier, while you have dithered and delayed, your Ontario Power Authority has ballooned from 15 employees to over 300. The number of employees making \$100,000 a year has skyrocketed from six to 75 in 2009. That is a spectacular 1,300% increase.

Premier, that same rot, that same bloat and waste we saw at eHealth, you're now injecting in our energy sector. Why is it that Ontario families are stuck with a bill for your expensive energy experiments?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, just so we understand our history together, in 2003 we were desperately short of electricity in the province of Ontario. We were experiencing brownouts, and we were in danger of blackouts. Their approach to that, in panic mode, was to put diesel generators in our cities; I remember that.

So far we've brought 8,000 megawatts of new generation online. We've invested in over 5,000 kilometres of transmission upgrades. We're making a massive investment in clean and green electricity. We're creating thousands and thousands of new jobs—all this in addition to ensuring that there's enough electricity to keep the lights

on. That's good news for Ontario families, and it's good news for Ontario businesses.

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ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: I think you know that Ontario families understand that you're kicking down the road your long-term energy plan because you don't want Ontario families to know how many more rate hikes you have up your sleeve, how many more expensive experiments you're going to put on families in our province in your penchant for trying to socially engineer households across this province. I suspect Dalton McGuinty's so-called plan will also show how you have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member of the comments I made last week on references to other members in the House. I will lay this out to all members that, as a warning, if this persists, I'm just going to bypass to the next question.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you've bungled your smart meter scheme, turning them into nothing more than tax machines. You've failed to set out any path to renewing our nuclear capacity. You have signed expensive sweetheart deals to build more jobs in Korea through Samsung and stuck us with the bills for 20 years.

The PCs believe in stable, reliable and affordable energy. Why do you take a path that involves chaos, expensive experiments—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to revisit this issue again. There's some really good news here for the people of Ontario, both families and businesses. We have a plan. It's a plan to keep the lights on. It does not consist of that silly approach brought by the former government, which was to put diesel generators into our cities. We're making investments of new generation and new transmission.

The other thing we've done is we've made heavy investments in conservation. In fact, in 2003, a national organization gave our province a C- as a grade. This past year, our grade for conservation is A+. So in addition to massive investments, new transmission, new generation and renewable electricity, we're working very hard on the conservation front as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, your approach has been clear. Ontario PCs believe in stable, reliable and affordable energy prices for Ontario families, and all we see from the McGuinty government is chaos, expensive experiments, dithering and delay, and Ontario families have been stuck with the bill. We need to look no farther than your new eHealth of the energy sector—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, your Ontario Power Authority has ballooned beyond proportions, and they can't get the job done. Your smart meters have become an expensive experiment in taking more money out of Ontario families' pockets. Why is it that when you back-track, whenever you flip-flop, whenever you add to the bloated bureaucracy, it's hard-working Ontario families that are stuck with the bills?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think I made it very clear that we have a plan. It's a long-term plan. It's designed to ensure that we can keep the lights on.

The other thing that we are going to keep working on is, we understand that because of the new investments that we're making in modernizing our electricity system, there are some costs associated with that, and we understand that consumers, ratepayers, moms and dads in our homes, families, have to deal with some of those costs. We are going to continue to work with families to address those costs. I want to make that perfectly clear.

I also want families to keep in mind the alternative put forward by my honourable colleague, such as it is. They have no plan. What we can draw from their past experience is that they believe in diesel generators; they believe in burning dirty coal. We don't support that. They don't believe in investing in conservation. We do believe in that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Renfrew, please come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And Durham.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And Halton.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Folks from the Ottawa Valley sometimes bring a great deal of enthusiasm to this place; that's not always a bad thing, I say to my honourable colleague opposite.

The point I was making is that we are bringing forward a thoughtful, comprehensive, intelligent, long-term plan investing heavily in generation and transmission; we understand there are costs associated with that. We have no choice but to move forward and modernize our system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, come on. Your only plan is to say that some day you'll have a plan coming. You said you had a plan back in 2006. Then you ripped it up and said you'd come back later. Three weeks ago, your energy minister said, "We'll have a plan this fall." This Monday he tossed that aside and said, "Well, maybe we'll have a plan after the next election."

In the meantime, chaos reigns in the energy sector. The OPA has bloated beyond all proportion. You paid Bruce Power, Premier, almost \$60 million not to produce any power whatsoever. You surprised families with a \$50-million backdoor energy tax grab. We're going to

pay for 20 years for your massive subsidy to the multinational Korea-based corporation, Samsung. Then you piled the HST on top of it all.

Premier, why is it that Ontario families always get stuck with the bill for your bungling in the energy sector?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think we might ask ourselves what created the absolute necessity for us to act so quickly and make these massive investments? It's because they sat on their hands—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to please retrieve the item that the member from Nepean—Carleton had on her desk. She very clearly knows the rules.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: A lot of energy over there and not too much light.

I think it's important that we compare and contrast. Remember, their electricity plan was to put in place diesel generators in our cities. We're expanding Niagara Falls. We're expanding capacity on the Mattagami River. We're building new gas-fired turbines. We're investing in wind turbines. We're investing in solar panels. We're creating a whole new industry of renewable electricity. We're investing heavily in conservation. We know there are costs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Households across Ontario are being shocked by huge increases in the cost of electricity, yet this government seems intent on making hydro even more expensive. Last year it paid Bruce nuclear \$56 million not to generate electricity. With more and more Ontario families struggling just to make ends meet, why did this government cut a deal that adds another \$15 to each and every hydro bill?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. John Yakabuski: When are you guys going to expand Lake Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the member from Renfrew to please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The fact of the matter is, our government is absolutely committed to ensuring the reliability of our energy system so that the power that Ontario families and businesses count on is there when they need it, and that's what this is all about.

Nuclear power is a critical component of our energy mix. It's an emissions-free, cost-effective source of

power. We know the NDP doesn't support that but it's a critical part of our energy system.

This agreement provides the flexibility to ensure that there's enough power there when we need it. You don't build a fire hall and buy a fire truck just when the fire happens. You need to invest in that ahead of time. The NDP obviously doesn't get that.

We need to invest in our system to ensure that the strength in our system is there when we need it, and that's what this is all about.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Fifteen bucks out of each household's family budget might not seem much to this Premier or to his minister, but that's an extra \$15 that's not going to the groceries of those families.

This Premier keeps saying that hydro bills need to go up if we're going to keep the lights on. At a time when the Ontario families already feel they are being nickelled and dimed to death, why is each and every household in Ontario being forced to pay Bruce nuclear \$15 to do absolutely nothing?

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Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me be very, very clear about this: This agreement between the Ontario Power Authority and Bruce nuclear provides protection for Ontario ratepayers. That's what it's all about. Unlike in the past when the Tories and the NDP were managing the system, Ontario ratepayers will not be on the hook for overruns for the refurbishment of Bruce beyond the \$3.4 billion. That's important. That's responsible. That's protecting ratepayers as we engage in the refurbishment of our nuclear industry, a refurbishment that is absolutely necessary to ensure that we have the reliability in the system that we did not have seven years ago.

We're committed to building a stronger, more reliable and cleaner energy system. We will continue to be committed to that with or without the support of the NDP.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I want to remind the honourable members again—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Halton—that it is important that they speak in the third person, that they speak through the Chair and that they not speak directly across the chamber to one another.

Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier and his minister just don't seem to get it. His government quietly renegotiated a deal with Bruce. Now Ontario families are forced to pay more, even if Bruce isn't generating any power. It's yet another slap in the face for the people of this province on top of the HST on hydro and on top of not-so-smart meters.

At a time when Ontarians are finding it harder and harder just to keep their heads above water, why is this Premier asking them to dig even deeper into their pockets for essentials like hydro?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We believe in protecting ratepayers when it comes to making these investments.

That's what that agreement between the OPA and Bruce was all about.

We operate in reality. It's very clear that the NDP do not. They voice opposition to all sources of power, in particular nuclear. We know that we need that baseload capacity for the sake of the power that our families rely on in their day-to-day lives and for the sake of the businesses that drive our economy.

The NDP's vacuous and unrealistic energy policy would be absolutely devastating for our economy. It would be absolutely devastating to our efforts to create jobs. It would also be devastating for the 70,000 people across this country who make their living in the nuclear industry—jobs that would be extinct if that party had its way.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier, but I'd have to say his minister needs to know that people tell me they want the government to actually protect their interests and their pocketbooks for a change.

The McGuinty government's electricity equation is not pretty for the people of Ontario. Ontario families don't think it's pretty at all: \$15 per household for private nuclear power that we don't use, more than \$1 billion on smart meters that don't work and an HST that adds another 8% on top of all of that.

When will enough finally be enough?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I welcome the question, but frankly I'm a little bit surprised that the leader of the NDP, a representative of a long-standing Ontario political organization, is not supportive of a plan that puts such a heavy emphasis on drawing energy from the renewables sector. This is a party that always stood for harnessing the power of the wind and the sun and biomass, that used to stand for investing heavily in conservation, that used to stand for creating the good new jobs that are associated with energy from renewables. I'm not sure what happened to that party. But, on behalf of the people of Ontario, I would welcome the return of that party that supported a progressive energy policy in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier forgot our long-standing policy against nuclear energy. I don't know why he forgot about that.

But families in Ontario are what I care about, and they are being zapped by higher electricity bills, and affordability is simply becoming out of reach. Davida Girard from the GTA writes this: "We just received a hydro bill for \$300.... I realize it's been a very hot summer but am at a loss to understand why our hydro has more than doubled!"

On Monday, the government announced a public consultation on their energy plans but said they won't consider a second look at their nuclear program. Why is the Premier shutting the door on a public conversation about his expensive nuclear expansion dreams?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: All right, I think we've got the nub of it here finally: The NDP remains opposed to nuclear energy in Ontario. I understand that. I reject that, and of course I can't accept it. Nuclear generation makes up about 50% of the electricity supply that we rely on today. It's the foundation for a very strong industry, with thousands of well-paying jobs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I certainly do appreciate the efforts of individuals in here to assist the Speaker in his role, and I thank them for that. I do remind the honourable members that there's nothing wrong with sitting in another seat, but if you're going to be sitting in another seat, you must not be in any way heckling.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I was saying that obviously I can't accept my colleague's approach with respect to the nuclear industry in Ontario. It's a very important part of the foundation of our electricity supply. It contributes about 50% of our electricity. It stands for thousands and thousands of jobs here, and we think it has an important and bright future for all of us. So as far as we're concerned, it will remain an important part of the foundation of electricity generation in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Jocelyne Drapeau writes, "I received my highest bill this month: \$426.77, compared to \$295 last year." Patricia Austin in Etobicoke adds: "My hydro which was already skyrocketing is outrageous. I ... live from paycheque to paycheque." Yet this government plows ahead with a nuclear plan that is billions and billions of dollars over budget, even after a recent report found that the cost of nuclear power has tripled.

With the lives of people like Ms. Austin and Ms. Drapeau becoming more and more expensive each and every day, why is the Premier afraid to have a public conversation about his costly long-term nuclear plans?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There will be important consultations on the latest revision of a 20-year long-term plan, and we look forward to hearing from all Ontarians in that regard.

Again, I think Ontarians know that we were in a desperate circumstance in 2003, given the fragility, vulnerability and unreliability of the electricity system that we inherited. We've been making massive investments in order to change those circumstances. We understand that there's a cost associated with that. We understand that families, in particular, have to help pick up some of the costs associated with that. We're going to continue to find ways to work with our families to keep those costs down. But I think that the first and foremost responsibility we owe to all Ontarians—families and businesses alike—is to make sure that when they go to the wall and flick on the switch, the lights come on, and we're going to keep doing that.

GOVERNMENT CONSULTANTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. Freedom-of-information records obtained by the Ontario PC caucus show that the same Liberal-friendly consultants who got rich from the sole-source-contract spending spree at eHealth also benefited from Cancer Care Ontario. John Ronson and Courtyard Group scooped up \$15 million, while Will Falk and Accenture were handed almost \$9 million. Ronson is the Premier's former election campaign director. Falk is the former Liberal staffer they had on speed-dial back when they hired Sarah Kramer as the CEO of eHealth.

How could the Premier not know about all the money members of the Liberal family were making from the funds that Ontario families thought they were paying for health care?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. It gives me an opportunity to say thank you to the people at Cancer Care Ontario and the people who deliver cancer care right across this province. We are extremely proud of the cancer care that is provided in this province, and we owe a big thank you to Cancer Care Ontario.

When it comes to the issue that you're talking about, I think people understand that this is old news; there's nothing new here. This was released some time ago. We changed the rules. Since the issues that you're talking about we've got very clear accountability rules, and Cancer Care Ontario is a leader in following those rules.

We're very proud of the changes that we've made. We have ended sole-source contracting. We have significantly more accountability and transparency when it comes to these contracts, and that's all moving in the right direction. The people of Ontario deserve that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: We agree that Cancer Care Ontario is doing a great job; that's not the point. The point is about the consultant spending spree that's been going on, and at Cancer Care Ontario it's even worse than it was in the eHealth boondoggle. This government handed Courtyard \$10 million from eHealth Ontario and \$10 million more from the Ministry of Health. Accenture was handed just under \$2 million from eHealth Ontario plus an eye-popping \$72 million from different cabinet ministers.

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A pattern has developed where, in eHealth, the LHINs and Cancer Care Ontario, it's all been used as a slush fund for Liberal-friendly consultants rather than improving front-line health care. So my question to the Premier would be, how many different treatments could have been funded or emergency rooms kept open if this money had been used instead for developing proper front-line health care that Ontario families expect and deserve?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: With the greatest respect to the member opposite, she needs to understand that this is very old news. In fact, we requested an internal audit

of Cancer Care Ontario. That audit was posted online in October 2009. So a year ago we released all this information. We have changed the rules when it comes to procurements and consultants. We think the people of Ontario demand that the money they spend on health care be used on health care. That's why we've changed the rules.

I think it's noteworthy that in the last year that the party opposite was in power, they spent \$662 million on consultants.

SOLDIERS' REMAINS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Tourism and Culture. The Premier said he would look into funding for the reburial of the War of 1812 soldiers' remains. Instead, this minister refused funding, telling Hamilton to utilize its one-ninth share of the western corridor bicentennial alliance, which is an amount of \$50,000.

Instead of taking decisive, positive action, why are the Premier and this minister turning their backs on fallen soldiers by telling Hamilton it can lobby for its \$5,500 share, which will in no way help this re-interment?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question and also for the opportunity to talk about 1812. The War of 1812 is an important part of our history and heritage. With regard to the city of Hamilton's request, it is not within my ministry's mandate.

Let me read the letter that I received from the mayor of Hamilton:

"That council direct staff to file a request for funding to the Minister of Tourism and Culture, Michael Chan, in the amount of \$200,000 as the province's contribution to the Smith's Knoll project which includes the property purchase, demolition, archaeological dig, site restoration...site interpretation and expansion of the parkette."

As I said before, it is not within my ministry's mandate to fund purchasing land and excavation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: That's an interesting response. The minister asked me to ask Hamilton city council to request these funds in writing, which I did. The minister then picked one small bit from the background notes—property acquisition—to refuse funding even though funding wasn't requested for that piece of the project. In fact, the deal for the land closed by the city on Friday.

Will the Premier and this minister stop playing us and commit to all veterans across Ontario that they will provide \$200,000 for the proper interment of these fallen soldiers?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question again. We are determined to celebrate 1812 come 2012. Our government so far has invested \$27 million in funding to celebrate 1812. On top of that, we have funded \$1 million to local organizations. We have aligned the province into seven regions and the region that is representing the city of Hamilton—the organization is called the western corridor bicentennial alliance. I would encourage the

city of Hamilton to engage this western corridor bicentennial alliance to come up with a proposal so that we can, come 2012, celebrate 1812 in Stoney Creek.

TUITION

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Last week, Statistics Canada released a report on provincial university tuition fees. They found that Canadian full-time students in undergraduate programs this fall paid 4% more, on average, in tuition fees for the 2010-11 academic year compared to what they did a year earlier. Statistics Canada also reported that Ontario had the highest undergraduate university tuition fee increase in Canada, at 5.4%.

Minister, it was my understanding that Ontario university tuition was capped at 5% annually. If this is the case, why is Statistics Canada reporting that Ontario's undergraduate tuition is higher than 5%?

Hon. John Milloy: I appreciate the honourable member's question. It gives me an opportunity to reassure this House that, as well as having one of the most generous student assistance programs in Canada, we also do cap tuition here in the province of Ontario. For first-year undergraduate students, it's capped at 4%; for upper-year students, 4.5%; and for graduate and professional programs, at 8%. The way StatsCan reported its data, it mixed both professional and undergraduate programs; hence the higher number.

I want to further assure members that we work very closely with our institutions to make sure that they follow these guidelines. If they step over, we will take action against them. But I think it's very important to stress to the House that since the tuition framework has come in place, there has not been a single instance of a college or university that has not followed the guidelines.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: My main concern is for the students studying here in Ontario. Students know they need to obtain a good education in order to compete in today's high-skills economy. However, there are many people who feel that post-secondary institutions have become too expensive. My fear is that potential students will be discouraged from applying to our institutions because they don't think they could afford it, and the debt they could accumulate is just too high. I know that Ontario houses some of the best universities and colleges in the country, but the reputation of a particular institution alone wouldn't retain students. What is the government doing to limit tuition fees and keep post-secondary education accessible?

Hon. John Milloy: As I noted in the first question, we have, experts tell us, one of the most generous, if not the most generous, student assistance program here in the province of Ontario. Through the Reaching Higher plan, we contributed \$1.5 billion to enhancing student assistance, and a few months ago we announced further enhancements of \$81 million to ensure that students have

the resources they need to move forward. I also mentioned the student access guarantee, where we mandate institutions to automatically provide a student who is facing a high-cost program with additional funding.

We have an affordable system, and the numbers speak for themselves: Since we came to office, we have 140,000 more students in our colleges and universities, and the default rate on student loans is at the lowest rate that it has ever been. We will continue to work to make sure that no student is ever denied access to college or university for financial reasons.

OLD AGE SECURITY PAYMENTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. When the federal government introduced legislation to stop old age security pension cheques from going to jailed criminals, they asked the Premier of this province to help apply the same changes to the provincial rules, so that criminals in our provincial jails here in Ontario would no longer receive old age security. The changes have pitted child killers like Clifford Olson against hard-working Ontario seniors, who deserve this extra assistance above their Canada pension plan. So I ask: Whose side is the Premier on, hard-working Ontarians' or criminals like Clifford Olson?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The question was a bit incendiary, I think, when he asked it of us, but I'm aware that the federal government has recently introduced the bill that's called C-31. It pertains to people who are sentenced collecting old age security benefits.

As you know, I think there are 22 prisoners in our system who are eligible for any kind of benefits. In Ontario we have legislation now, as you would know, that suspends the entitlement to recipients who are in prison for more than 90 days. Such things as guaranteed annual income system, Ontario sales tax credits and HST transition cheques—all these are suspended for those who are serving 90 days and over. So we do that in the province of Ontario.

We have indicated our support for the federal legislation in principle. We want to, of course, see the details and work with our federal partners whenever we can.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, the federal government hasn't heard you, I say to the minister.

You mentioned payments that are no longer going to criminals, but I'm asking specifically about old age security, which is to cover food and rent for Ontario seniors, not criminals in Ontario's jails. Criminals like Clifford Olson already have their room and board covered: covered for life by the taxpayers. They do not deserve this extra assistance.

Could you please convey in a very clear way to the federal government that you will support the legislation, and will you stand up here today and say you will support

the legislation and bring in the necessary changes here in this Parliament to make sure OAS cheques stop going to criminals?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think it's reasonable that the federal government is, in fact, following our lead in the province of Ontario because, as I've mentioned to my friend, the guaranteed annual income system—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: That is it. The Ontario sales tax credits, the HST transition cheques—we already do that in the province of Ontario, so it certainly would be consistent that we would not want to see them receive the federal cheque as well. All we have to do is get some detail from the feds. In principle, we're there; we already do it. We want to look at any funding costs there might be to provincial governments, technical implications and other possible implications.

But listen: We already do it, so why on earth would we oppose what they're doing? Of course we're in favour of it. I don't know why the member is trying to stir something up on this other than, perhaps—

Hon. Monique M. Smith: No, don't say it. Don't say it.

Hon. James J. Bradley: No, I wouldn't say it's for partisan reasons.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Don't suggest anything about Jim.

Hon. James J. Bradley: My friend across would not do that.

But we already do it, therefore—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Premier, today's annual report from Ontario's Environmental Commissioner is an indictment of Liberal inaction on the environment. Ontarians are already paying big money to deal with extreme storms and other impacts of global warming. Why doesn't your government have a plan to achieve your promised reductions in greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my critic for the question.

First of all, we want to thank the Environmental Commissioner for his annual report. He has the confidence of all three parties in this House. He plays a unique role: Over his 10-year tenure, and including today's report, he has challenged the government of the day to do better. Because of the challenges that he has given all of us in the past, we now have protection for the boreal forest and for the greenbelt. We are protecting Lake Simcoe and have a greenhouse gas reduction plan—all of those things. The fact that we're getting rid of dirty coal-fired generation in this province, that we're banning the use of cosmetic pesticides, is all because of the good work of

the Environmental Commissioner, challenging us always to do better.

I want to say to the commissioner that I look forward to reading his report in detail—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, I do hope that the minister reads the report in detail, because just as last year, when he said that the government, the Liberals, were not actually delivering on the plans and promises they had put forward, it continues to be the case. The government is not enforcing its own laws. Thus we have dirtier lakes, we don't have protection in the north and we don't have the protection on climate change that this government has promised it will give.

When will the Liberals actually deliver on the promises they've made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and stop just talking about it?

Hon. John Wilkinson: On this side of the House, that's exactly what we do. We are the first government in North America to say that we will not burn dirty coal to generate electricity in the province of Ontario. It is the single most important thing that our government can do to meet our commitments under the Kyoto accord. That is why we are doing that.

I can assure the House that we are already 71% of the way there, and we have every intention of ensuring that coal-fired generation is a thing of the past. It is something that our children and our grandchildren will thank us for one day.

We want to thank the Environmental Commissioner. Because of the challenges that he lays out progressively to governments of the day, that is why these changes are taking place. I look forward to working closely with him and his office.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Pat Hoy: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Many of my constituents have been worried about access to appropriate care for their elderly parents. They want to ensure that when their parents need help maintaining their health, they will be able to receive it in a timely manner.

I understand that the aging at home strategy has given Ontarians throughout the province access to the care they need without having to leave their home. Could the minister please update the House on the progress that has been made through our aging at home strategy?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex for his work for the people of his community.

I'm very pleased to report that the aging at home strategy is successful in bringing long-term-care patients out of hospitals and back home where they get the care they need. They get the care they need so they can live independent and productive lives.

In August, I announced that our government is investing an additional \$143.4 million as part of our aging at

home strategy. It's a \$1.1-billion strategy that's making a difference. It supports a wide range of personalized services to keep people at home as long as possible.

This funding, delivered through the LHINs, assists those who wish to remain at home. In the supplementary, I will talk about some of those investments—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Pat Hoy: My constituents will be pleased with an innovative strategy to help Ontarians get the right care at home or within the community.

Ensuring that we provide access to health care for long-term-care patients is an extremely important aspect in reducing wait times at hospitals throughout all our communities. I know there are programs in my riding that have helped seniors recover through tough surgeries, for example.

My constituents are also interested to know about their local aging-at-home programs. Could the minister please provide the House with some examples of useful programs that my constituents could use within the community?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Erie St. Clair LHIN is funding over 100 new and expanded programs through the aging at home strategy. I'm going to talk about two of them—just two examples.

The falls prevention program at the Chatham-Kent community health centre will target seniors who have had a fall or who are at high risk of having a fall because they've had recent hip or knee replacement surgery. In addition, a second program that complements the falls prevention program is a community-based rehabilitation team. It provides individualized rehab care to seniors with osteoarthritis, with a history of falls or seniors who are recovering from hip or knee replacement surgery.

The Erie St. Clair LHIN has the highest rate of knee replacements in the province, and we expect these investments will dramatically reduce ER visits and hospital readmissions. We know that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. During the 2007 election campaign, the McGuinty government promised Ontarians an affordable housing strategy which was to be released this past spring. Can the minister answer when this government will follow through on their promise to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Members will please come to order. I would like to hear the question, please, and I'm sure the minister would like to hear the question as well.

Please continue.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is, when will this government follow through on their promise to release the long-awaited affordable housing strategy?

1120

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Affordable housing is very important in the province of Ontario. I want to congratulate the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario for finally standing up and asking a question about affordable housing.

I am very proud of the McGuinty government track record, and we will compare our track record against their track record any day. Ontarians will have a clear choice to make in the future. They will see our long-term housing strategy, implemented for the first time by a government in Ontario, compared to their strategy of disassembling affordable housing, slashing units, making sure that 19,000 of them—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Order. Order.

Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'll take that as no, they're not going to be releasing the report.

The minister's rhetoric doesn't fly with the almost 142,000 people who wait on the affordable housing list; nor does it fly with the almost 600,000 people who pay more than one third of their salary for rent; nor does it fly with the about 20% of tenants who pay half or more of their income on rent. Could the minister please tell Ontarians when he will be releasing this crucial report?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: It is a very, very important issue. I am very, very proud of the consultation that we've done over the last little while. I'm very, very proud of how we've engaged the partners in affordable housing. I'm very, very proud that just yesterday, I was in Windsor speaking to the Ontario Home Builders' Association about the importance of affordable housing. They get it. They understand the importance of it.

We're not going to be cancelling 17,000 units as you did—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Member from Nepean. Member from Lanark.

Minister, please continue.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: This is a strategy we will be unfolding after our consultation and our analysis have taken place, because we know the people who are interested in affordable housing know it's the right approach to use. We will continue to use the right approach in developing a strategy, not cancelling 17,000—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

in this province of contaminated meat finding its way into Ontario stores.

With food safety at the top of mind, why does the McGuinty government want to reduce the frequency of licensing renewals and audits at abattoirs and meat processing plants?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to speak to this because I can tell you that food safety is paramount. When we look at what is important to our farmers and what's important to the people of Ontario—they know that when they buy Ontario product, it is safe. They know that when they make their purchases, that is what they can be guaranteed.

That's why I am very pleased to say that since we formed government, we have implemented the Haines report, we have hired meat inspectors, and we have done that with the understanding of how important the abattoirs and free-standing—are to the local food movement. I can tell you that the people of Ontario get it. They know that our food is safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's what I don't get: It's actually the annual licensing and auditing that keep Ontario families safe. In 2008 the Auditor General reported that "major and serious deficiencies" at abattoirs and meat processing plants were uncovered during audits.

Bob Lowry, a government meat inspector, is here with us today. He is worried. He's very worried that reducing the frequency of audits from one year to three years will threaten public health in this province.

Will the Premier agree with this expert and with the Auditor General of Ontario and pull the plug on this very, very bad idea?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Food safety is our first priority. It always has been, and it will continue to be the case.

I want to say that we've provided \$25 million in transition assistance for our processors in order to meet the regulations. We've worked with the Ontario Independent Meat Processors to provide on-the-ground understanding of the risks that are faced in our production of meat.

Let's speak to what happened in the past and what we see today: under the previous government, 10 full-time meat inspectors prior to 2004. Today, our government has 170 inspector positions.

We understand how critical it is that food is safe; we know that it is. Everybody wins when you buy Ontario, and food safety—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Twenty-three Ontarians died of listeriosis arising from contaminated meat in 2008, and there are regular reports

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Ontario's universities are world-renowned for the quality of their education and the calibre of their graduates. Our universities attract stu-

FOOD SAFETY

dents from around the world to study science, engineering, medicine and other academic disciplines.

In my riding of Scarborough—Rouge River, international students have approached me seeking career opportunities here in Ontario. They want to remain in our province after they graduate to contribute their skills, talent and education. However, these international students are concerned that they must first secure a job offer if they want to stay and work in Ontario.

Can the minister tell this House what the government is doing to retain more highly educated international students when they graduate?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I very much appreciate the question. Attracting the best and brightest talent in the world is a priority for the McGuinty government.

We recognize that in an open Ontario, a highly skilled workforce is absolutely essential to ensure that our province remains strong and prosperous. That's why our government is taking action to ensure that high-value international students stay in our province when they graduate.

Our expanded provincial nominee program will make it even easier for international students to remain in Ontario after they have obtained an advanced degree from an Ontario university. International students who have earned a master's or a Ph.D. degree in Ontario will no longer need an offer of employment in order to apply to be fast-tracked for permanent citizenship.

These changes are part of our Open Ontario plan to build a strong economy by creating opportunities for international students to pursue their professional aspirations—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: As experts have been reaffirming for some time now, our economy is going to be dependent on the production of highly skilled educated graduates. The provincial nominee program is one way to help Ontario retain this talent.

Would the minister tell us what other incentives this government is planning to offer to reach a goal of increasing the presence of international students at our institutions by 50%?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased to report to the House that during the last academic year, we had over 38,000 international students in the province of Ontario, which makes it about a billion-dollar contribution to our economy.

As was outlined in the Open Ontario plan, we're working aggressively with our colleges and universities to promote Ontario internationally and undertaking a number of programs and initiatives, including those that my colleague outlined in his first question.

Just to give you one other example, I visited U of T earlier this summer to announce our support for MITACS's Globalink India-Ontario program. This international internship program brought 45 students from

India to work in research and with our leading-edge companies for the summer. It's a way to acquaint some of the best and brightest students with what Ontario has to offer, and we are confident that it will attract—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1130

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Last fall, the Auditor General reported what everyone has long known: The WSIB is broke, it's broken, and it's an utter failure. Because of the mountainous WSIB debt, worker benefits are in jeopardy.

We are all too familiar with the shenanigans of the Liberals' old friend, the nebbish WSIB chair Steve Mahoney. Remember him? He billed taxpayers for more days than there are in a year. Under Mr. Mahoney's keen and frugal eye, the WSIB unfunded liability has doubled from \$6 billion to \$12 billion.

Minister, why is Steve Mahoney still the chair of the WSIB, even though he has defrauded the workers of Ontario? Is it because he is a member in good standing of the Ontario Liberal Party?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: First off, I'm not going to engage with that member in a personal smear of an individual. That's his approach. I think the member should speak to the leader of his party, who actually gave the chair of the WSIB a pat on the back with a letter saying he's doing a commendable job. So speak to your member.

But further, the WSIB is such an important institution to the health and safety of Ontario workers, and that will be our top priority: to ensure that the WSIB is financially stable and sound, that they have a plan moving forward, that they are that security for when workers go to work, so they know, if they are to get injured, that the WSIB is there for them so they can get those benefits—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the Minister of Labour: The people of Ontario are sick and tired of your sweetheart deals for your Liberal friends. Ontarians want accountability.

In February, Tom Teahen, a failed Liberal candidate and former aide to the Minister of Labour, was anointed as chief of corporate services at the WSIB without any external competition.

You promised Ontario better, but one year later we're still getting more of the same: Liberal friends getting rich off the broken backs of Ontario workers. One year later, your friends are still getting untendered contracts. Minister, when you promise something and you break that promise, what does that make you?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment. I just would caution the member that even implying something can be unparliamentary.

Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We've all seen where they on that side of the floor stand when it comes to workers' health and safety, and it's shameful. It's shameful that I'm getting a question from that party that cut injured worker benefits by close to 30% when they were in government.

That is not the approach that we are taking. We understand the importance of the WSIB as an institution to provide those benefits to injured workers, to be that safety net for workers so that when they go to work, they know that if something happens, they are going to be taken care of.

It is also an important institution for businesses, as it provides businesses with no-fault insurance. We don't want to see the litigation that we've seen in other jurisdictions when it comes to health and safety in the workplace.

That party cut—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TECHNOLOGY IN SCHOOLS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Two years ago, the Premier warned parents to limit their children's cellphone use until the health effects are better understood. Now he is encouraging cellphones in the classroom. Does the Premier still stand by his warning? And if so, what has his government done to communicate this message to parents?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I have had a great deal of opportunity to speak to this, and I would say that the position that we've taken is that clearly, technology in the classroom is ever-evolving. I believe that there was an excellent example used last week when we talked about calculators. I had an opportunity to remind some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle that when I was in school, calculators weren't allowed. Now I know that many families get lists home, and that is a requirement for students in many classes.

What we do encourage is that whenever there are opportunities to improve student learning by considering new technology, we—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Back to the Premier: My question was about the safety of cellphones. The Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion just released a much-anticipated report on the health effects of wireless technology. The study did raise a red flag about the health impact of cellphones. It said that "there is emerging evidence that long-term frequent use of cell-

phones may be associated with an increased risk of tumours on the side of the head where the phone is used."

Given these findings, will the government clearly communicate the risk of cellphone use to the public so that Ontarians can protect themselves from the risks that the experts have identified?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Again, I think it's important that I clarify for the honourable member that we're talking about technology. There's technology where students can use an iPod, for example. They don't put it up to their ear; they use it in front of them.

I know that school communities and health officials across Ontario are very aware of these issues that parents—

Interjections.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: iPhones—I apologize.

We're talking about technology, and if it supports student learning I think that we do have a responsibility to ensure that we work with families to ensure that we can support student learning with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. John Milloy: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In answering an earlier question, I inadvertently reversed two numbers, and just for the record, I want to explain. Ontario's tuition cap is 4.5% in the first year, 4% for upper years of undergraduate and 8% for graduate and professional, with the overall average per institution not to exceed 5%.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm sorry to hear that the Liberals have lost their rump.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not a point of order.

VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Earlier today, I wanted to, but I wasn't here, introduce Guy Boone and Ray Barton, both from Ottawa, professional engineers. I welcome them to the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That was not a point of order, but welcome.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Leeds—Grenville has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given last Thursday by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade concerning the closure of Abbott Labs in Brockville. This matter will be debated at 6 p.m. today.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have three visitors here in the members' gallery west from the Armenian National Committee. They were Sam Manougian, Art Hagopian and Hratch Abrahamian. Thank you for joining us.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ARMENIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. John Yakabuski: September 21 marked the 19th anniversary of Armenian Independence Day, when Armenia broke away from the former Soviet Union and proudly unfurled her revered flag, the Yerakoyn, over the holy city of Etchmiadzin and the land of the descendants of Aram.

This historic day of pride for Armenian families across Ontario is an opportunity to remember the peaceful unity protests in February 1988 and to reflect on the immense challenges that were overcome to achieve freedom and democracy.

The Armenian community is firmly rooted in Canada. In 1922, prominent Ontarians such as Sir Henry Pellatt, Toronto Catholic Archbishop Neil McNeil and Anglican Archdeacon Cody organized the Armenian Relief Association of Canada, under the patronage of the Governor General of Canada, to bring orphans of the Armenian genocide to Ontario.

On June 29, 1923, the first group of Armenian orphans arrived here and settled in Georgetown, where they came to be known as the Georgetown Boys. Since that time, thousands of Armenian genocide survivors came to reside in Canada, to lay the foundations of today's vibrant Armenian-Canadian community, which continues to enrich our cultural mosaic to this day.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to our entire Armenian community on Armenian Independence Day.

YOM KIPPUR

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Last week, Jews around the world observed Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the most solemn of Jewish religious holidays.

Yom Kippur is observed on the 10th day of the lunar month of Tishrei, and is when Jews seek to atone for their sins and achieve reconciliation with God.

Yom Kippur concluded the 10 days of repentance that begin with Rosh Hashanah, which is New Year's Day, on the first day of Tishrei. It is on Yom Kippur that solemnity and cessation of work are most complete.

The purpose of Yom Kippur is to effect individual and collective purification by the practice of the forgiveness of the sins of others and by sincere repentance for one's own sins against God.

Yom Kippur is marked by abstention from food and drink. Jewish congregations spend the eve of Yom Kippur and the entire day in prayer and meditation. On the eve of Yom Kippur the Kol Nidre, famous for its beautiful melody, is recited. Friends also ask and accept forgiveness for one another for past offences on the evening before Yom Kippur.

The services on Yom Kippur itself last continuously from morning to evening and include readings from the Torah.

Yizkor, which are memorial prayers for the recently deceased, are also recited. The service concludes with the Ne'ilah, the closing prayers.

Yom Kippur comes to an end with the recitation of Shema Yisrael, and the blowing of the ritual ram's horn, known as the shofar, which marks the conclusion of the fast.

L'Shana Tova to all.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize yesterday's launch by Bell Canada of a \$50-million, four-year program to support mental health across Canada. This represents the largest investment ever by a Canadian corporation in support of mental health and it's meant to spark a debate about mental illness; its impact on individual Canadians, their families and on our national economy; and how we can better support those living with a mental illness.

George Cope, president and CEO of Bell, announced yesterday that the \$50 million will be used towards initiatives such as reducing the stigma associated with mental illness, supporting community care and access to mental health services, research initiatives and to the improvement of workplace mental health programs.

Mr. Cope also announced Bell Let's Talk Day, which will work to raise awareness of mental illness each year. Bell will hold its first Let's Talk Day on February 9, 2011. For every text message sent and long distance call placed by customers that day, five cents will be donated to mental health programs across the country.

I would like to applaud Bell Canada for recognizing and supporting this very important issue, and to thank them for leading the way to healthier, happier lives for Canadians now and in the years to come.

SCHOOL IN HORNEPAYNE

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Yesterday, a significant event took place in Hornepayne, the wonderful town at the northwestern border of the Algoma district. Its economy is anchored by Canadian National Railway and Haavaldsrud lumber. Their most important asset, however, is their young people.

Yesterday, the Algoma District School Board met in Hornepayne. The last time they had done that, I was with them to announce a new school for the community, a new school which had the support of town council, the

principal, teachers and parents, and most importantly, the students. There was great excitement from the students about their new school. The new school will now include the elementary school in this brand new structure.

This project signifies the commitment of the school board, the community and the town council to Hornepayne's future. But more than that, this totally provincially funded capital investment demonstrates the province's commitment to young people and the north, and in particular, the rural north.

The new school will have plenty of natural light throughout, especially in the common areas; new and updated computer technologies; a modern library; specialty rooms for art, music, computers and science; spacious and well-equipped manufacturing and construction rooms; a combined forum, cafeteria, activity room and storage area, which will be in the heart of the school; and plenty of play areas, including hard surface areas and sports fields.

The kids can hardly wait.

RAY TIMMONS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I rise to pay tribute to Ray Timmons, executive director of the Almonte General Hospital. After 30 years in that role and many great accomplishments for the people of Almonte and surrounding area, Ray is retiring.

Ray has led the Almonte hospital from being an aging, small-town hospital to being an innovative health care institution offering the highest quality of care from birth to long-term care at one location. I should tell you about Almonte General's partnership and then ownership of the Fairview Manor long-term-care home, and the \$29-million redevelopment of the hospital and construction of a new 112-bed Fairview Manor long-term centre.

1510

I could talk about the outstanding patient satisfaction ratings Almonte General received under Ray's leadership, but I want to tell you why I believe Ray has been so successful. Unlike most hospital administrators, Ray comes from the community he serves. He was on the hospital board before being appointed executive director in the 1970s. Every time Ray and his wife, June, left their home, people approached them with questions and suggestions about their hospital.

Because he comes from the community and cares so much about the community, Ray stayed on the job as executive director for 30 years. His longevity meant that the hospital has enjoyed great consistency, vision and direction.

Tomorrow night I will be attending Ray's retirement dinner. On behalf of members of this Legislature and all residents of Almonte and surrounding area, I want to thank Ray Timmons for his years of service, and I wish him and June all the best in the future.

TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Over the summer, I had the opportunity to meet with hundreds of people in my riding of Nickel Belt. Whether it was at their doorstep, at a community function or in meetings, there was an overwhelming concern over people's hydro bills and the added cost of the HST.

I met with constituents who are scared over hydro increases. Seniors on fixed incomes are shocked when they see their hydro bill. Small business owners are telling me that they just can't afford their hydro bill and question if they're going to stay in business.

People in Nickel Belt are afraid to open their bills. And those people are taking a double hit: Not only is hydro going up 8%, but also every home improvement. Right now, what I hear about the most about is ice time—how much more expensive it is to do figure skating or hockey in Nickel Belt because of the compounded effect of the HST. Life is getting more expensive for people right across my riding, and I'm sure it's the same right across Ontario.

Meanwhile, during the summer, I heard reports of Liberal-friendly lobbyists making tremendous money lobbying ministers on behalf of publicly funded hospitals. There seems to be a disconnect here. Some people are doing quite well while others are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet and to just get by.

People in my riding simply can't afford—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

CANCER FUNDRAISER

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: In my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, it's not unusual to see tractors on the road. But on July 24, it was really unusual to see 1,231 tractors on the road, with their drivers.

They came from all over Ontario and the state of Michigan, and they were there to promote and to break a Guinness book world record. The record was 601. They were able to not only do that, but double that record. At the same time they raised \$104,000 for cancer. That was very—

Interjection.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: They started the parade at the Glasgow farm and went from there to the Dresden fairgrounds.

The organizer of the event is Ken Richards. Ken actually had his tractor painted in pink, yellow and blue to represent all the forms of cancer. Ken is himself a survivor of prostate cancer, and this was his effort to not only break a record, but to also bring awareness to the whole issue of cancer.

I'm very proud of my constituents and all the organizing committee. McGrail Farm Equipment actually volunteered tractors for the MPs and MPPs to ride in. I have to say I was impressed, because I got to ride in something with computers in the dash, and I hadn't really seen a tractor like that. It was a very proud moment for me as

well. They were also there with antique tractors and all kinds of tractors.

It was the most important event that happened in my riding this summer. I was very pleased with what happened there.

WELLESLEY APPLE BUTTER AND CHEESE FESTIVAL

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to highlight the 35th annual Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival, which is taking place this Saturday, September 25, in the village of Wellesley in the riding of Kitchener-Conestoga. We invite one and all to come.

I know Mom and Dad are watching right now, so I say hi to them. They're in the riding and they're thinking about all the culinary food that is available Saturday in Wellesley, like the pork schnitzel, the pancake breakfast at 6 a.m., the apple dumplings, the fritters—I did have lunch, Speaker.

Also, there are wonderful things to be involved in: the cider mill tours, the model boat regatta, the stagecoach rides, the antique car and tractor displays, parades, and the horseshoe tournament, just to name a few.

Proceeds in the past from this event have helped to fund a new arena, a new ball diamond, equipment for the fire department and, of course, financial assistance for the Inspiring Minds Early Learning Centre in Wellesley, to name a few.

I want to take a moment to thank Bob Reid for his years of service and dedication, and all of the volunteers who work with Bob. It's under his leadership that the Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival has become such a wonderful event, attracting thousands of people from across Canada and around the world.

So I stand here proud to thank people like Bob Reid and Verna Metcalf, Ron and Teresa Bisch, Barb and Joe Nowak from Wellesley, Gerry Leis, Margaret Runstedler, Tara Blackwell, Steve and Faye Jantzi, Mayor Ross Kelterborn and hundreds more.

I invite everyone to please come to Wellesley this Saturday and enjoy the apple butter and cheese festival.

ASSOCIATION OF PROGRESSIVE MUSLIMS OF CANADA

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to take this opportunity to recognize the Association of Progressive Muslims of Canada and its very hard-working president, Mr. Mobeen Khaja.

Tonight, the association is celebrating its 16th annual Eid dinner at Parliament Hill in the great riding of Ottawa Centre. The master of ceremonies, for 16 years in a row, is MP Dan McTeague. This year, the association is honouring the Speaker of the House of Commons, Peter Milliken. As we all know, he has decided to retire. He'll be honoured for his long record of public service and as the longest-serving Speaker in Canadian history. Also at-

tending tonight, as I understand it, is the US ambassador, David Jacobson.

The association's objective is to project a positive image of Muslims and to promote the core Islamic values of peace, justice, respect, understanding, equality and appealing to people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The association's mandate is to build bridges of understanding among communities, governments and faith groups and to serve the social, cultural and educational needs of the Muslim community of Canada.

The 14th annual Eid celebrations at Queen's Park will be held on Friday, November 26, 2010, and I encourage all members to attend that important event, which will be chaired by former MPP Janet Ecker.

The association will also be hosting an Eid dinner, their fifth annual, at Toronto city hall, which will be hosted by Mayor David Miller.

Once again, congratulations to the Association of Progressive Muslims of Canada for all their good work.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REPRESENTATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA REPRÉSENTATION ÉLECTORALE

Mr. Hoy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 107, An Act to amend the Representation Act, 2005 / Projet de loi 107, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur la représentation électorale.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Pat Hoy: The purpose of this bill is to change the name of the electoral district of Chatham-Kent-Essex to Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding committee membership.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that the following changes be made to the membership of the following committees:

—on the Standing Committee on Estimates, Ms. Van Bommel replaces Ms. Mangat;

—on the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, Mr. Balkissoon replaces Ms. Pendergast;

—on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Ms. Pendergast replaces Mr. Arthurs and Mr. Delaney replaces Mr. Murray;

—on the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, Ms. Van Bommel replaces Mr. Delaney;

—on the Standing Committee on General Government, Ms. Mangat replaces Mr. Chiarelli; and

—on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Mr. Arthurs replaces Ms. Van Bommel.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members have heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

1520

RICHARD POTTER

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allocated for each party to speak in remembrance of the late Dr. Richard Potter.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I rise on behalf of Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats to say a few words about Richard Potter, a person who was here way before I was and, quite frankly, before all the members of this present caucus were here. But I've had a chance to talk to Mr. Ferrier, one of my predecessors who was a New Democrat in Timmins-James Bay and who knew him because he served in the House at somewhat the same time.

I just want to say first of all that we, on behalf of New Democrats, want to extend to the family our condolences on the passing of Richard Potter, who was a former member of this House, and a member of the Conservative caucus and of cabinet at the time.

Mr. Potter was an individual who was born at a time when public service meant something; when the public, when they got the call to serve their nation, did so without thinking and without any concern for their own safety. Mr. Potter, as we know, had studied medicine prior to the Second World War and, when the war was called, was one of the people who volunteered to use his experience and expertise as a doctor in order to treat and care for soldiers who were injured as a result of the battles they fought on the battlefields of Europe. Mr. Potter joined the Canadian Armed Forces and served in an advance mobile unit to care for those individuals who had gotten injured.

I can tell you, as a member of the Canadian Armed Forces, that I was lucky to have served at a time of peace, where the worst thing we ever had was an injury rolling out of the bar at night. I say that in light, in the sense that we served at a time when we didn't have conflict and didn't have these types of things to worry about. At the time of the Second World War, for the soldiers back then it was very real.

Mr. Potter understood that there was something to be gained by putting forward his services as a doctor to try to preserve and save the lives of those men and women who decided to go forward for this country and basically try to fight for what they believed in; that is, a democratic state here in Canada.

He came back from the war, luckily uninjured, decided he would continue in public service and eventually decided that he would take up the call, as we call it in our business. He ran for municipal council in the 1950s and was elected as an alderman in Belleville, where he came from. Interestingly enough, he became the mayor within a year. I think it says something about an individual who runs for office as an alderman—a bit of an unknown in the sense of being a political neophyte, as we know it today—and a year later gets the support of his council and his community to serve as mayor. He did so for a long period of time and was known as a tireless worker for the people he represented on his municipal council.

Lo and behold, something happened: something that was called redistribution. Redistribution brought along a new riding in his area, Quinte Potter—excuse me, the riding of Quinte; we call it Quinte Potter because he was the first one to run. He ran in the inaugural election and was elected in 1967 as a member of the assembly.

You've got to remember that Ontario and Canada were a very different province and a very different country in the 1960s. All of us in this House today—New Democrats, Liberals and Conservatives—take for granted the thing we call public health care. But back in those days, it was not something you took for granted. For some, it was a mission to bring public health care to this country and to the provinces of Canada, specifically Ontario. Mr. Potter was way ahead of his time and, as a Conservative, was a tireless champion of public health care.

He understood, in the day, that if we were going to be able to serve our communities and if people were to be able to live without the fear of going into poverty because they got sick, we would need a public health care system that didn't just look at how you got your doctor's bill paid when you went to the doctor's office for whatever it might be, but that your system of health care included the hospital, long-term-care facilities and such things as prescription drugs.

In that fact, I think Mr. Potter was way ahead of most people—maybe not of most of the people but of most politicians—when it came to what was needed in a public health care system. We forget that public health care in Ontario didn't come until the 1960s. So he was very much at the beginning in a Conservative government that had to make the decision of the day to opt in to the Canada health care plan back in the 1960s, and was part of that discussion about what health care should look like in this province, based on what had happened first with Tommy Douglas in Saskatchewan, but eventually happened in this province under the Conservative government of the day.

Mr. Potter was known and was respected, I believe, by all sides of the House—this is the message that I got from the former representative, Mr. Ferrier, who sat in this House as a member from Cochrane South—as somebody who was sort of seen as the go-to person on the health care file when it came to the Conservatives, who played his role and understood what his role was in regard to that debate over the years, and who continued, even after public health care was introduced in Ontario and made law, to advocate for the type of things that he thought needed to be included in a public health care system.

He served in various cabinet positions in the Conservative government, and I'll let Mr. Sterling, who I believe will be here a little bit later, speak to that, because I know he would have known him at the time—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Mr. Miller.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Miller; excuse me. I always say Mr. Sterling because he has been around here for so long.

Mr. Miller will speak at some length, because he would have known him through a family connection and others. But he was known as a minister who really took an interest in his ministry and understood that if anything was going to happen when it came to the delivery of services, he needed to have people in the ministry who were on side, who were part of the plan and respected him as minister enough to be able to move things forward, and certainly that's something that he had.

He decided, as some members in this House do, of his own volition, to leave this place. There are very few of us who get that opportunity. Unfortunately, for too many people in this assembly, the choice is made for you by your constituents. But he decided in 1975—he had done his public service and had been in public life for many years—after some 26 or 27 years, to move out of public life and to take his retirement. He returned back into Belleville in order to spend more time with his family and his community. He ended that career, but he continued in public service, eventually became the coroner serving his hometown and surrounding communities, and continued to serve as he did in his community in the ways that he was able to by being involved in a number of activities and organizations back home.

I want to say on behalf of Andrea Horwath, the leader of the New Democratic Party, my colleagues here in the New Democratic Party, and those who served before me who had the pleasure of serving with Mr. Potter, job well done—the respect from our caucus to you as a person who had contributed to what we know now as Ontario and take for granted, and we say to you thank you for your time in this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm delighted to rise on behalf of the Liberal caucus to pay tribute to Dr. Dick Potter, who was, as my good friend from Timmins-James Bay was saying, a wonderful legislator here at Queen's Park.

I read a quote from the Belleville Intelligencer when Dr. Potter passed away, from his good friend Dr. Bruce

Cronk, who said, "He had no hesitation to say what he thought. There was no sham or artificiality... He called things as he saw them." And for the people who knew Dick Potter, that was who he was.

Yes, he was a family physician, and he served as an anesthesiologist. Because he was a doctor, he called it the way he saw it, and he had an overarching passion for health care. When he got here in 1967, the same year that my good friend Hugh Edighoffer became the member for Perth, he got right to work on so many committees, but if you look at his career prior to becoming a minister of the crown, he always served on the Standing Committee on Health, dealing with the very issues that the member from Timmins-James Bay was talking about: having universal, accessible health care for all in the province of Ontario.

You know, it has been said that in his military career he also was outspoken. His good friend Dr. Cronk said that he would say in the military to his superiors, whom he would challenge, "The only way they could get rid of me was promote me and send me somewhere else." That's why he left the service of the military as a lieutenant colonel, getting himself promoted in the field repeatedly, because he called it the way he saw it.

I recall speaking to my father—my mom and dad knew Enid and Dick quite well, and he had the opportunity, as the Minister of Health, to speak to the Trenton Rotary Club. Of course, I grew up in Trenton and then went to high school in Belleville. Dick was over at our family home prior to this Rotary Club meeting.

1530

Dick would always tell you what he thought about health care. One of the things he would always say was, "Premier Davis is spending too much money on education and not enough money on health care." That was said by the Minister of Health. Isn't that amazing, that he would actually say that? Perhaps he ran afoul, but that's who Dick was. He would say that he was a straight shooter and he had no problem telling people where he thought our province should go.

He served with distinction as a minister without portfolio, then became the Minister of Health, which I think was a dream job for him here in this Legislature. He also served as the Minister of Correctional Services. He decided in 1975 not to run again. I was talking to my own personal mentor, Hugh O'Neil, who served in the House with distinction from 1975 to 1990 as the MPP for Quinte, first in opposition and then as a cabinet minister—someone that Premier Peterson used to go to to get things fixed, I remember. He's been a wonderful mentor to me. But Hugh O'Neil said that if Dick Potter had not decided to leave public service, he would never have become the MPP for Quinte because Dick Potter was unbeatable in the riding. That's how well he was respected and loved.

Because of his decision not to run, it resulted in a rather acrimonious nomination battle on the Conservative side of the fence, which led, according to Hugh O'Neil, to that ability for him to win a riding that many people

thought a Liberal could not win. Then, of course, Hugh became a very well-entrenched MPP because of his public service.

I want to end the tribute by saying that I'm here particularly on behalf of my good friends the MPP for Northumberland–Quinte West and the Minister of Education, who is now, of course, the MPP for Prince Edward–Hastings.

Dick was a true elder statesman when it came to public health care. Many people don't know that our former Minister of Health, George Smitherman, would have Dick come from his new home in Oakville, where he retired to be close to his family, to Queen's Park to have lunch with him at least once a year while he served as Minister of Health, just to get advice from an elder statesman, a person in this House who had fought the battle to have universal public health care in this province. I find that a telling anecdote about how well he was regarded by his colleagues.

I would say that today in Ontario, when we have about half of our operating budget devoted to the Ministry of Health, his legacy of being a family physician and an anesthesiologist and coming to this place to serve has set a tradition which we see today. There are four members of our caucus, colleagues of mine, who are family physicians and who have decided to take some time out of their very busy medical practices to serve in this House because health care is so vitally important. I know that for my colleagues the member for Oak Ridges–Markham, Dr. Jaczek, who serves as my parliamentary assistant; my good friend the MPP for Etobicoke North, Dr. Qaadri; my friend the MPP for Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Dr. Kular; and the member for St. Paul's and our Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Dr. Hoskins.

Dick Potter called it the way he saw it. We in this place are indebted to his contribution. On behalf of all of our caucus, we want to extend to his family our deepest condolences and our unending admiration for the service that he provided to this place and to the province that we love.

Mr. Norm Miller: On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I am honoured to say a few words in tribute to the late Dr. Richard Thomas Potter. Dr. Potter died on February 17, 2010, in hospital in Oakville, Ontario. He was 93 years of age.

He distinguished himself throughout his life serving in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps; as mayor of Belleville; as the MPP for Quinte; as a family doctor and anaesthetist; as the loving husband of Enid Grace Weaver, to whom he was married for 68 years; the devoted father of four children, Tom, Frances, Andy and Karen; and the caring grandfather of 11 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Dr. Potter attended Queen's University medical school, graduating in 1939. He immediately enlisted as a military medic in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps. When he retired from the military in 1945, he held the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Dr. Potter returned to Belleville following his military service, where he worked as a family doctor and anaesthetist. In 1950, Dr. Potter entered municipal politics when he was elected alderman in Belleville. A year later, he ran for mayor on a campaign promise to establish a municipal health unit and expand community recreation facilities, a promise he kept.

In 1967, Dr. Potter successfully ran for member of provincial Parliament as the Progressive Conservative candidate in Quinte. During the eight years he served as MPP for Quinte, he held three ministerial positions: minister without portfolio, Minister of Health from 1972 to 1974, and, finally, Minister of Correctional Services until 1975.

My father, Frank Miller, was named Dr. Potter's parliamentary assistant at health on October 1972. In his memoirs, my father said of him, "Dr. Potter had been a MASH colonel and treated the ministry as if he was a wartime commander. He was honest, intelligent and determined to bring his ideas to the ministry, like having insured nursing home care as a lower-cost alternative to hospitals."

Dr. Potter recommended my father to Premier Bill Davis to take over as health minister, despite Father's only three years' experience as MPP and no cabinet experience. My father told this story in his memoirs:

"I was flying on a windy winter day at Muskoka in a Cherokee 180 when the control tower told me to land and take an important call. It was from Dr. Potter. He simply said, 'How are you, Minister?' I said, 'What are you talking about?' He told me I was replacing him and he had asked Bill Davis if he could be the first to tell me. I was in shock."

The other personal connection I have with Dr. Potter is a reflection of his generosity. In about 1976 he gave us the use of his Port Charlotte, Florida, home for a week. I had the privilege of driving my parents and sister down to Florida and back for the holiday.

During his assignment to the Ministry of Correctional Services, he continued his predecessor's commitment to take corrections into the community and bring volunteers from communities into correctional work.

According to Dr. Bruce Cronk, Dr. Potter's straight-talking nature got him into trouble, and the military was no exception. During his military service, Dr. Potter would joke that the only way they could get rid of him was to promote him and send him somewhere else.

Sometimes labelled a rebel, Dr. Potter said of himself that he wasn't trying to fight the establishment but was just trying to encourage government to make changes. As a result, his political career was not always smooth. For example, without waiting for his cabinet posting, he called for the integration of medical and hospital insurance and the inclusion of nursing home care, dental treatment and prescription drugs. His strong philosophical attachment to this policy caused him to be removed from the chairmanship of the Standing Committee on Health.

Dr. Potter fought for health reforms that to some extent conflicted with the policies of his own government.

During the Conservative leadership race in 1971, he urged delegates not to commit their votes unless candidates shared their intentions and goals on important issues. He wanted assurances from leadership candidates that untapped backbenchers' resources would be utilized and that the standing committees would be more effective. He also wanted the government to take a realistic view of the staggering costs in government programs.

Despite his love of and dedication to politics, he decided to retire at the tender age of 60 in 1975. On the day he announced his retirement from politics, he expressed his desire to spend more time with his family. Though his decision was met with relief from his family, the staff at the Ministry of Correctional Services expressed disappointment.

When Dr. Potter was asked how he would sum up his political life, he said, "I wouldn't have missed it but I'd hate like hell to go through it again."

Laughter.

Mr. Norm Miller: I think we can all relate to that.

He always said that the reason he went into politics was not to jump like a trained seal and ring a bell but to get some badly needed changes in the health and welfare departments. I believe he made his contribution on these files.

In 1976, shortly after retirement from politics, he was appointed the regional coroner. This position allowed him to be near his family in Belleville; however, it did require him to close his private medical practice and serve as a full-time public servant.

Former mayor of Belleville George Zegouras once said of Richard, "You knew where you stood with him ... he wasn't telling you one thing to your face and another at your back."

His closest friend, Dr. Bruce Cronk, commented that "there was no sham or artificiality ... he called things as he saw them."

Dr. Potter's unwavering efforts to change government for the better may not always have succeeded, but it was not due to his lack of will. He didn't allow anything to stand in his way, even when it meant confronting his own political party.

1540

Today, Dr. Richard Potter is being remembered as a man of integrity, intelligence and boundless energy. He devoted himself to every role he assumed. He is the embodiment of the ideal of service to others: service to his family, his community, his province and his country. He is an example to all of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to thank all the members for participating in the tribute to Dr. Potter and would say that condolences will be expressed to the family, with copies of the Hansard and a DVD of the proceedings.

PETITIONS

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: "Whereas the Ontario government is making PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients; and

"Whereas" since "October 2009, insured PET scans" are "performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Brandon.

RECYCLING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, provided to me by some of the grade 7H students at Lisgar Middle School. I'd particularly like to recognize Tricia Beazer of Cactus Gate and Leslie Todd-Bruin of Sundew Court for their efforts in collecting the signatures. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the grade 7H students of Lisgar Middle School believe that the current method of recycling used dry cell batteries and other household hazardous waste materials is not successful. We have attempted to create the easiest and most comprehensive method of recycling batteries and other household hazardous materials.... This initiative fits directly into the same frame of reference as the blue box recycling and composting programs, which have encouraged individuals and households to recycle as much as they already do. We implore the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to give the proposed initiative of a household red box recycling program your approval;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support, enthusiastically, the Recycling Raptors of grade 7H at Lisgar Middle School in their proposal of a household red box recycling program, and to pass into law such" an initiative.

This is a well-drafted petition, and I'd like to commend the grade 7H students at Lisgar Middle School, to affix my own signature and to ask the page to carry it for me.

HIGHWAY 15

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition that has been certified by the table from the good folks—by hundreds

of residents of the township of Rideau Lakes in my riding. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the point that Highway 15 intersects with County Road 42 has been considered by many to be a hazardous intersection, particularly when local residents travel over the provincial highway; and

"Whereas in 2007 the Ministry of Transportation staff presented design plans which showed a dramatic reduction in the curvature of this portion of Highway 15, which would have considerably improved the level of visibility and safety to our residents crossing over Highway 15; and

"Whereas in late 2008/early 2009, the Ministry of Transportation revised the 2007 design plans for this intersection, which would only minimally improve the visibility and safety of this intersection but would result in a significant reduction in the amount of funds expended by the province of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Transportation be respectfully requested to direct staff to recommend the 2007 design plan for the intersection of Highway 15 and County Road 42."

I'll affix my signature.

CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas, even though health care institutions in Ontario have the equipment and expertise, those MS patients who have been diagnosed with blocked veins in their neck (CCSVI) cannot receive the necessary treatment in Ontario; and

"Whereas many of the MS patients with CCSVI, at great personal expense, have had to seek treatment in other countries such as India, Poland, Bulgaria, Italy and the United States, the provincial government still has not authorized the procedure, which is angioplasty, an already approved procedure since the early 1980s; and

"Whereas not all people with MS will have CCSVI, and not all people who have CCSVI will have MS, CCSVI treatment should be authorized and treated on its own merits, regardless of any MS issues; and

"Whereas, [despite] numerous testimonials of exceptional post-treatment improvements in the quality of life for patients, accompanied by detailed presentations by vascular surgeons to the Ontario government, the Ontario government still has not yet approved CCSVI treatment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Health, must immediately approve and fund all diagnosing and treatment of CCSVI by qualified Ontario health institutions."

This has been signed by hundreds of people in northwestern Ontario, and I affix my signature as well.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition containing 605 signatures from Lori Emmell, an MS sufferer in my riding, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known, universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"Whereas, while more research is needed, MS patients should not need to await such results;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow people with multiple sclerosis to obtain the venoplasty that so impacts their quality of life and that of their family and caregivers."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

"Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

"Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 70;

"Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment in 2007 to provide a 2% base funding increase to agencies providing developmental services every year up to 2010-11;

"Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

"Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to service providers in the developmental services sector."

As I am in favour, I've affixed my signature and will send it with page Brandon.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Pat Hoy: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas grandparents often become a family's first reserves in time of crisis. Grandparents act as fun playmates for children, role models, family historians and mentors, and help establish self-esteem and security for children;

"One potential aspect of the divorce is the disruption or severance of the grandparent-grandchild relationship;

"Also, in cases of the death of a parent, (the maternal or paternal grandparents' child) should continue to enjoy access to the grandparent by the living parent, as visitation and access was fully established prior to death of parent;

"Due to the increase in life expectancy, most children have living grandparents. Coupled with the fact that 60% of divorced couples have at least one minor child, the potential for severed contact could be quite substantial;

"In Canada, the issue of grandparents' rights of access to grandchildren has not been given recognition in legislation, with the exception of the provinces of Quebec, Alberta and BC. In all other provinces, grandparents may only petition the courts for rights to access as interested third parties. In the absence of a specific statute providing grandparents with legal standing to access, there are continuing difficulties in obtaining contact with grandchildren;

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"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That grandparents have legal rights to access to visitation with their grandchildren in the event of parental divorce or death of a parent."

This petition is signed by hundreds from my riding, and I too have signed it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition signed by the good people of Cambridge which reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other hospitals in the Waterloo region are experiencing substantial increased demands due to population growth; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's freeze on new long-term-care facilities has resulted in additional long-term-care patients in our hospitals; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's cuts to hospital funding have resulted in a dangerous environment for patients and staff in Cambridge and across Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the McGuinty government meet its obligations to introduce a population-needs-based funding formula for hospitals, as has been done in other Canadian provinces."

Pursuant to the rules of the House, I affix my name thereto.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed these laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition and will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Nick.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today that was presented to me by Mr. Ken Sharp.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it and give it to page Emily.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by members of the Hazelbrae Barnardo Home Memorial Group, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

As I agree with this petition I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

"Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

"Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 70;

"Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment in 2007 to provide a 2% base funding increase to agencies providing developmental services every year up to 2010-11;

"Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

"Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to service providers in the developmental services sector."

As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature and given it to page Megan.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have here a petition from the Poplar Hill First Nation.

"Whereas we oppose Bill 191, the Far North Act, and call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to withdraw it;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Bill 191 violates the treaties and disrespects our jurisdiction. It imposes a massive interconnected, protected area over our homelands without any compensation. It splits our northern First Nations from our southern First Nations.

"Ontario has an obligation to honour and respect our treaties and our inherent jurisdiction. All development and protection decisions within NAN territory require free, prior and informed consent of NAN First Nations.

"We call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately withdraw Bill 191 and, instead, initiate a respectful government-to-government dialogue with NAN First Nations."

I take it I will sign the petition and the government will not call it as the order of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 14, 2010, on the motion for adoption of the recommendations contained in the final report of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

On September 13, Mr. Flynn moved the adoption of the recommendations contained in the report of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions entitled *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Report adopted.

FAR NORTH ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE GRAND NORD

Mrs. Jeffrey moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 191, An Act with respect to land use planning and protection in the Far North/ Projet de loi 191, Loi relative à l'aménagement et à la protection du Grand Nord.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate? Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm proud to rise today in the House to move third reading of Bill 191, the Far North Act, 2010. I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Sault Ste. Marie.

Today we have an unprecedented opportunity to initiate progress and positive change in Ontario's Far North. This proposed legislation is a significant milestone on a journey that began more than two years ago, when Premier Dalton McGuinty laid out a new vision for the Far North of Ontario, a vision to work jointly with First Nations in striking the right balance between

environmental protection and sustainable economic development.

In 2006, the Premier attended the opening of the Victor diamond mine. His visit to Attawapiskat prior to the opening was a recognition of the historic partnership that developed between Ontario, First Nations and industry in opening Ontario's first diamond mine. His visit also set the stage for the Premier's vision for the Far North.

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The Premier understands that responsible development in the Far North is the key to Ontario's future prosperity, and the Premier understands that land use planning can help protect areas of cultural value and ecological systems in the Far North, as well as provide a sustainable future for First Nations and northern communities. I want to thank the Premier for making his commitment to the Far North a priority for this government.

Today, I also want to acknowledge the leadership of my predecessor in this portfolio, Donna Cansfield, the member for Etobicoke Centre, who stood beside Premier McGuinty when he laid out his vision for the Far North. I would also like to take this opportunity to offer a personal thank you to assistant deputy minister David de Launay for giving up his summer vacation with his family and for providing invaluable advice and assistance over the last seven months.

I'd also like to thank my deputy, Virginia West, as well as all the members of my team at the Ministry of Natural Resources for their wise counsel and their patience over the last couple of months; it has been a challenging summer with lots of twists and turns. The staff at the ministry have put in very long hours. They've travelled to various locations throughout the Far North and across this province, gathering information and making sure that all voices and viewpoints were heard and included. This was truly a team effort, and I want you to know that your dedication has not gone unnoticed. Your attention to detail and your willingness to find a better way to describe the new partnership we were trying to build with First Nations and the government of Ontario, I believe, only improved the final language and amendments in the legislation we are debating this afternoon. Thank you.

We're at a defining moment with regard to the future of the Far North of Ontario. This region is under increasing pressure for new development. Although the Far North makes up more than 40% of the province, this vast area has never seen the kind of comprehensive land use planning that we traditionally take for granted in the rest of Ontario. Bill 191 would give us the framework for land use planning that meets the special requirements of this vast and unique part of the province.

Getting to this point has been challenging, I'll admit. There are those who have been critical of the process and who say it has been flawed. Some claim that the government hasn't listened. This is simply not the case. Traditionally, bills only go out for hearings once. From the beginning, this government committed to carry out

additional hearings. I was lucky enough, as a backbencher, to travel with the Standing Committee on General Government to Thunder Bay, Sioux Lookout, Chapleau and Timmins in the summer of 2009. These conversations helped guide our first round of amendments. More than 40 separate outreach sessions were held by my ministry, reaching representatives of all First Nations communities who stood to benefit in community land use planning in the Far North.

This past May, we held a workshop in Thunder Bay for First Nations to share information and ideas on land use planning. We had tremendous interest and uptake in this training session. In fact, 28 communities from across the Far North sent representatives to this meeting. We've also met with mayors and councillors from many northern communities, including Pickle Lake, Moosonee, Thunder Bay and Timmins, to ensure that we heard and addressed their specific concerns about how land use planning might have an impact on the chromite development in the Far North. As well, we saw comments and feedback through a posting on the Environmental Registry.

The proposed legislation includes valuable input from members of the Far North Advisory Council and the Far North Science Advisory Panel, some of whom have joined us today. Thank you. These two advisory bodies provided essential perspectives, from both environmental and resource industry positions, and increased our understanding of the many complex issues we needed to address in the Far North.

After second reading of the bill, plans were made to travel again, only this time to Slate Falls, Sandy Lake, Attawapiskat, Moosonee and Webequie. Unfortunately, we learned shortly after the House rose that these First Nations were not able to host standing committee hearings on the dates set out by the Legislature. At first, I was disappointed by the news, but soon I saw this setback as a golden opportunity to personally visit more communities in the Far North and to engage community leaders on their own terms, without time constraints, to carry out these in-depth discussions.

My team listened to First Nation leaders, elders and youths from every corner of the Far North. They spoke of their fears and the dreams they had for their communities, and we used these discussions to guide the way that we crafted the amendments to this bill.

I'm proud to say that as a result of this outreach with First Nation communities, resource development stakeholders and environmental organizations, our government presented 43 amendments for the committee's consideration. These amendments, I believe, make Bill 191 a stronger, more inclusive piece of legislation.

I would like to take some time today to set the record straight about what Bill 191 will and will not do. First and foremost, Bill 191 is about land use planning in the Far North. The subject matter of the bill is not about First Nations' jurisdiction over the land, nor does the bill address treaty interpretation. These issues are substantial in nature and are clearly part of a much larger conver-

sation outside the scope of this bill and would more properly require the involvement of the federal government.

Existing aboriginal and treaty rights are recognized and affirmed in the Constitution, and the province must and will meet its obligations. Bill 191 cannot change this reality. To emphasize this point, we have stated right in the purpose statement of the bill that land use planning in the Far North is to be done in a manner that is consistent with the recognition and affirmation of original and existing aboriginal treaty rights. We can't get clearer than that.

What the bill does do is set out a joint land use planning process between First Nations and Ontario. The bill confirms a leadership role for First Nations through community-based land use planning in deciding which lands in the Far North will be protected and where development may occur. It would put into law, for the first time in Ontario's history, a requirement for First Nations' approval of land use plans on public lands.

Since becoming Minister of Natural Resources, I have come to appreciate the special relationship that exists between First Nations and the land. The land is an integral part of the cultural, economic and spiritual existence of First Nations. The relationship between the people and the land must and will be the cornerstone of all future decision-making.

Some have speculated that Bill 191 would hinder economic development in the north. Land use planning is about orderly development, not shutting down development. Land use planning guides the development in the rest of Ontario, and we believe proper land use planning is also important for the Far North. Our government remains committed to supporting investment and development in the Far North in co-operation with First Nations, creating new jobs and exciting long-term economic prospects. By opening the door to sustainable development of the region's rich natural resource potential, we know that Bill 191 will provide a more prosperous future for the people of the Far North as well as economic benefits for the province as a whole.

Bill 191 will also support new economic activity in the Far North by providing resource industries who want to invest in the north with much-needed clarity and certainty about how and where economic development such as forestry, mining and renewable energy may take place. We've also read some editorials predicting that the ultimate implementation of this bill would potentially shut down development and economic opportunities until community land use plans are in place. We've taken proactive steps to address those concerns. We've amended the bill to allow the pursuit of specific types of developments that have the support of First Nations to take place concurrently with planning processes.

I'm confident that Bill 191, as it stands now, will help transform the Far North in a positive way and can strengthen the relationship between First Nations and Ontario based on principles of joint responsibility and accountability.

Since becoming the Minister of Natural Resources, I have carefully listened to and learned from the people who are most touched by this bill: the people of the Far North. I had a wonderful summer, and I'd like to share with you some of my experiences in the Far North that helped shape my thinking about how to proceed with this legislation.

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As minister, I've been fortunate enough to visit eight remote communities in the Far North. I met many elders and learned about their central role in each community. I saw a chief seek the advice of elders to help inform and guide their decisions on behalf of the community. This respect for elders is a truly humbling thing to witness.

I was also struck by how each community values and considers its young people when making decisions. Young adults make up the majority of many First Nations communities. I met many very impressive young people, but I'm just going to tell you about two of them today.

In Muskrat Dam, I met 18-year-old Ginger. She presented as a thoughtful young woman who's planning a career in travel and tourism. Ginger took the time to articulate her community's views and suggestions on how to improve the Far North Act.

In Webequie, I met Travis, who, at 22 years old, is already a councillor in his community and is clearly wise beyond his years. He was particularly eloquent about the need for job opportunities in the Far North and the need to focus on training, trades and education for his community. Travis wanted to make sure that the decisions we make today provide hope for meaningful long-term employment in the future.

Like every other young person in Ontario, Travis and Ginger have hopes and dreams for the future. Bill 191 could be part of opening that door to realizing their dreams and providing that future they so clearly want and need.

When I was in the Far North, I visited some First Nation communities that have taken the lead and are already working with the province to develop community-based land use plans for their areas. In fact, I'm happy to report that almost 90% of First Nations who wish to develop community land-based plans are already involved to some degree, ranging from initial engagement to the more advanced stages of planning.

Pikangikum First Nation has a completed community base plan in place. So far, eight other communities are at the advanced stages of planning and are making significant progress towards the preparation of land use plans. Just last week, I had the opportunity to sign a letter of intent with my colleague Minister Gravelle and Chief Eli Moonias of Marten Falls First Nation and Chief Cornelius of Wabasse First Nation. This letter of intent reaffirmed a commitment to work together on economic development and land use planning in the Far North and a commitment to address issues related to the development of mineral-rich deposits in the Ring of Fire. This is a great example of what we can achieve when we work together. The Ring of Fire will help build a stronger

economy and create jobs for First Nations communities in the Far North.

Right now, there are 25 communities at various stages of engagement with my ministry in preparation for initiating plans. In one of the communities I visited, I listened to an oral presentation on the status of the community's land use plan. The first presenter was an elder. He was very candid, and he shared with us the fact that he was initially afraid of what this bill would mean to his community. He felt that before he understood what his role was going to be in creating the land use plan, initially he'd wanted to run for his life, that changes were something to run away from. He joked that at first he'd renamed the bill "Bill 911."

But then he shared with me that his opinion had changed over time and that he'd become comfortable with the concepts and the process, and he transitioned back to calling the bill by its right name, Bill 191. He told us that he felt that the planning process between his community and the staff at the ministry had actually developed into a true partnership with no hidden agenda. He shared the fact that at the community monthly meeting, members share the mapping that they've done on traditional uses of the land, combining the traditions of the oral history with the technological tools of the new generation.

The result is an evolving blueprint, a living document that tells the story of the community: its past, its present and its future. For example, when the community decided they wanted to protect the waterways in their community with buffer zones larger than the ones recommended by the ministry, the community decision was the one that went forward, and they now have the buffer zones they chose in their plan. When the young people in the community decided that they wanted to address the need to protect species at risk, they put that component of protection in their plan. That presentation was so interesting and dynamic, it was clear to me that these community-led plans are not dry documents; they're full of rich history and they demonstrate the special relationship First Nations have with the land.

It's essential that we continue to provide First Nations communities with the resources and the tools that they need to fully participate in land use planning. Taking part in this process will build skills and expertise within communities and help create new jobs for First Nations.

To date, we've provided funding to all communities that have come forward to work with us on land use planning. This past July, I was pleased to announce \$2 million annually over three years for skills training related to Far North community-based land use planning as part of the government's northern partnership training fund. And more recently, we were able to secure an additional \$10 million which will provide funding to Far North communities and tribal councils who wish to work with Ontario on land use planning. This funding will be used to support community engagement and mapping of planning areas as well as to build First Nations' capacity and skills. Through these agreements, we're putting in

place essential building blocks for sound and effective land use planning.

As community-based land use planning moves forward, we want to be confident that plans are built on the best science and knowledge available in order to address the many complex ecological, social and resource-based issues of the Far North. Because the Far North is so remote, there's a lot about this vast and varied region we don't know. When we began two years ago there was limited mapping. The information available for the Far North was very limited, and even those areas that had been mapped were last charted more than 30 years ago, and at a scale where only major features could be seen. I'm happy to report that, through a partnership with the federal government, we have now produced up-to-date topographic maps for all of the Far North. We're also in the process of mapping the soils, the vegetation and the watersheds, an enormous task that will provide vital information for land use planning.

To fill our knowledge gaps, the province is working closely with First Nations to increase our overall understanding of the Far North through a variety of knowledge and information projects. We're helping First Nations receive local training in how to use GIS technology, a skill that will be applied to collecting traditional aboriginal knowledge related to lands and resources as well as cultural areas.

Aboriginal traditional knowledge, as handed down from generation to generation over many centuries, will also play a key role in increasing overall understanding of the Far North and will make an essential contribution to land use planning. Because traditional knowledge is so important to land use planning, we proposed a stand-alone clause in the legislation to formally recognize its importance and value.

The Far North of Ontario is, without question, one of the last great wilderness spaces on our planet: a boreal landscape so vast it takes in a staggering 42% of Ontario's land base. It is a beautiful and remote region of our province and contains the largest intact forest in Canada and the third-largest wetland in the world. It's home to hundreds of species of birds, plants and wildlife, including many species that are at risk. The Far North plays a key role in fighting the effects of climate change by acting as a giant carbon sink, and its rich abundance of forests, minerals and green energy opportunities has the potential to provide a sustainable and more prosperous future for the people of the Far North as well as economic benefits for the province as a whole.

The passage of Bill 191 would mark the end of one journey and the beginning of another. The actions we take today will have a lasting impact on the Far North environment and will make a difference to the health and prosperity of its people for generations to come. Today, every member of this Legislature can help to realize an extraordinary vision for the Far North of Ontario, a vision where First Nations and Ontario work together as partners to share joint responsibility for community land

use planning; a vision where First Nations can plan a better future for their young people.

In my travels to the Far North I have come to better understand the significance of having thousands of years of history on the land. I've seen first-hand how a whole community thinks about their youth and how decisions are guided by what is best for these young people and for future generations. While most Ontarians do not have thousands of years of history on this land, I think we all understand and share the vision of a secure and prosperous future for our children.

1620

With Bill 191, we have an opportunity to try something ambitious, something unprecedented, an opportunity to usher in a new era of social prosperity, economic certainty and environmental protection for all of Ontario, but in particular for the incredible part of the province we call the Far North. We all recognize that Ontario's northern ecosystem is very important to the world. How we manage our north has direct consequences not only for individual communities, but for the entire planet. The rest of Canada, indeed, the rest of the world is closely watching the implementation of Bill 191.

It's not an easy task, but it is our responsibility as members of this Legislature to rise to this challenge. Not only do we owe this to the province we currently represent but to future generations. If we succeed, Ontario will be a shining example for others in Canada and around the world.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Here we have Bill 191. I listened with interest to the minister. She was going to set the record straight about her consultations that failed and were cancelled this summer. She was going to set the record straight about how much consultation this Liberal Party was involved with. But I want to put on the record what was actually said in committee last Monday, September 13.

In response to a question from the member for Timmins-James Bay, the minister said:

"Mr. Bisson, I have spent the last month trying to get people to talk about the bill and to talk about the proposed amendments. I've had some difficulty getting people to return my phone calls and to have a discussion about it.... There hasn't been a lot of that conversation happening. The improvement to the bill could have been made in the last month had chiefs attempted to provide me with that advice." That's what the minister said on the record last Monday, September 13, just a week ago.

Now, of course, the spin and the rhetoric that we hear is that she's been talking with everybody. Nobody would return her call last week or last month, but now they've done their due diligence of consultations.

I think what's important for everybody to understand with this bill is when we talk about legislation, when we enact legislation in this House, we always talk about balance, compromise and recognizing competing interests—that a good bill is well-balanced, recognizes those com-

peting interests, and, eventually, we get agreement on Bill 191 or on any bill.

Let's put this in balance. Let's hold up the scales and allow everybody to look at the balance of probabilities on this bill. Bill 191 has been denounced by the Environmental Commissioner of the province of Ontario. It's been denounced by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. It's been denounced by the Anglican Church and by the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada. The Ontario Mining Association has denounced it. The Ontario Forestry Association has denounced it. The Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce has denounced it. The Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, the northwestern Ontario associated chambers of commerce, the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities—every northern municipality has denounced it, every northern industry group has denounced it and every First Nation that actually lives there has denounced it. That's on one side of the equation. It's pretty heavy, who's denounced this bill.

But then, on the other side, what do we balance that with? We balance it with one: the World Wildlife Fund. Monte Hummel has endorsed Bill 191. He put out a press release last week, on September 15. He says, "We felt the conservation objectives were secure in the proposed legislation...." Monte Hummel on one side and every northern municipality, every northern business group, every northern native community on the other side—and this minister is pleased with the result. She's happy with the result, because when this bill is finished with, when it's enacted and proclaimed into law, it will be the largest land swindle that this province has ever seen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'd like the member to withdraw that.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll withdraw.

But we can see that we have a transfer of ownership and control of a quarter-million square kilometres of land. We've taken it away from all the people in northern Ontario and we're giving ownership and control to the green friends of the Liberal Party. Monte Hummel is happy; everybody else is upset, everybody else is outraged. But Monte Hummel is happy, so it must be a good bill.

A quarter of a million square kilometres of land taken out of production, taken out of exploration; it precludes and excludes every individual from any opportunity in that land. We don't know what's there. We do know that there are valuable resources in the north. I know the minister said that they've mapped the soils there now, but they don't know what's underneath the soil, do they? They don't know where the chromite is, they don't know where the gold is, they don't know where the opportunities are, but nobody's going to find them. Nobody's going to be allowed to go looking for them because you've got your park for Monte Hummel. The Monte Hummel grand park of Ontario: That's what we've got here.

When we look at the deficit position that the province is in, we know that this Liberal government has a little difficulty with addition and subtraction. But they do

understand where votes are. They do understand mathematics when it comes to votes. They understand that Monte Hummel and the World Wildlife Fund have more votes that they can get than the people in northern Ontario—that there's more votes with Monte Hummel than there is for NAN; that there's more votes for Monte Hummel than for the chambers of commerce in northern Ontario or the northern municipalities. The Liberals do understand that simple math. They don't understand about income and expenses, but they do understand votes. That's pretty clear.

So we have all these groups that are opposed and one that is in favour. Of course, I should say two: the Liberal Party. As the minister said, this is not the vision of the north as conveyed to them by NAN or the Cree or the Ojibway or the chambers of commerce or the municipalities up there. What vision is this? This is Dalton McGuinty's vision. The minister said that this is their vision for the north. Who cares about the people who live there on that side of the House? Obviously, none of them. They care about vote-rich Ontario, not resource-rich northern Ontario—not one at all.

We've seen their abject failure when it comes to having consultations with our First Nations people. They refused. On June 3, we asked this House for unanimous consent to amend the schedule so that this House and our standing committee could accommodate the needs of the First Nations. Two parties—the third party and the official opposition—were in favour. One party, the Liberal Party, said no. They refused to grant unanimous consent.

1630

We tried it again last week on our first day back in this House after our summer recess. Once again, we asked for unanimous consent so that we could provide an opportunity for a standing committee of this assembly to travel up north, speak with northerners and listen to them, because the minister has had trouble having phone calls returned. We thought it would be important that we get up there and give the people of northern Ontario a true opportunity. Once again, the Liberals had the choice, had the option. They could have said yea to unanimous consent, but damn the torpedoes, damn the north, they're moving ahead.

I have to say this: The minister was asked last week in committee, "Why are you doing this?" She said, "It's the right thing to do." The chambers of commerce are opposed, the municipalities are opposed, the First Nations are opposed, every industry group is opposed, and the minister has the gall and the arrogance to say she's right, Dalton McGuinty is right and they don't care about anybody else. Don't forget Monte Hummel. They do care about somebody else; they just don't live in the north. That's the truth. That's the record. That's undeniable.

We've seen that the Liberals are pretty good with spin, but it's not truthful. Spin is not truthful. Spin is the omission of pertinent and relevant facts. And those are the facts. That's the record. That's the record the minister

said in Hansard. I have to say that it is not just a few; everyone is opposed to this.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order, order.

Mr. Randy Hillier: This is the new relationship, the new partnership this Liberal government has gone out and told everybody they are building. They're creating this new relationship and partnership with our First Nations: "We won't take your phone call, we don't want to speak to you, we don't care what you want, but this is our new relationship."

We know that with Bill 191—what the north needs is certainty. The north needs certainty, and now it's creating uncertainty. The First Nations have said, and this is a quote from Grand Chief Stan Beardy, "We will do whatever is necessary to protect our interests, and if that calls for direct action, that's what's going to take place." That's what the Liberal Party is doing. They're creating an antagonistic relationship. They have no regard and no concern for this real partnership. They're driving their ship to their vision; they're driving it propelled with Monte Hummel blowing in the wind, I guess—in the sails. That's what we are seeing with this government.

Listen to what Harold Wilson, president of the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, said. He said that part of the problem with the legislation is that it has been given to the Ministry of Natural Resources: "The MNR has never in my time shown evidence of being able to foster economic development." Well, that's pretty bloody true. I've had lots of opportunities to work with the MNR, and they don't know how to work. The Ministry of Natural Resources doesn't know how to work. They know how to obstruct and they know how to impede, but they do not know how to work. They do not know how to work in northern Ontario or in rural Ontario. They are just a ministry of obstruction.

If this really was about economic development in the north, if this really was about economic development—

Hon. John Gerretsen: How about the landowners?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister, you're not in your seat, number one, and then, even if you were, you can't heckle from there, so order, please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I believe that the members opposite were speaking highly of that great rural institution, the Ontario Landowners Association. Anyway, thank you, Minister, for recommending how good a voice and advocate the landowners are. You should do that a little bit more often.

Anyway, let's see. I also want to talk—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member from Peterborough, it's not necessary to yell.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Mr. Speaker, it's difficult with all the heckling from the minister—

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The minister on the front bench here has a little bit of trouble controlling his mouthpiece.

If this bill is about economic development in northern Ontario, why is it not with the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry? Why is that not the case? The minister has never explained that to anybody. Why is the Ministry of Natural Resources, this group that is hogtied with the World Wildlife Fund, in control of this bill? Minister Gravelle of Northern Development—I think everybody would have been a little bit more at ease if Northern Development had been the author of a northern development bill, but to have the downtown MNR be the author of this bill is too much, and we have seen—you know, the minister said it very clearly. The minister said it very clearly when she said she has gaps in her knowledge. You mentioned that right in your speech. Listen, I won't disagree with the minister on that one. There are huge gaps of knowledge at the MNR, huge gaps, and I don't think there are enough trees in northern Ontario to fill that gap in their knowledge at the MNR. We've seen this time and time and time again.

I would like to say this and put this on the record: A quarter of a million square kilometres of land, 42% of Ontario's land mass, is off limits. It's the World Wildlife Fund museum and zoo. That's what that is. I would like people, the members on the opposite side, to think of this—and I thank God we didn't have this government when we first got settled in this province, because they would have just had half of southern Ontario as a zoo or a park or a museum. There would have been no settlement. There would have been no opportunities. There would be nothing. It's a zoo.

Can you imagine if southern Ontario was under the onerous restrictions of Bill 191? Can you imagine if half our land was off limits to people? Off limits: off limits to business, off limits to anybody except, of course, Monte Hummel. He would still be allowed to get there. But this is what we're seeing: all these land use plans that are under the direction of the MNR and their environmental friends. They are the ones who are driving this bill. They are the ones who are driving this transfer of ownership from northern people to their downtown environmental friends.

It was interesting last week in committee when the minister said that the natives are the driving force. I'm sure the members in the gallery would remember this, that the minister said the First Nations are the drivers. However, if and when the First Nations ask to do a land use plan, the terms of reference will have to be approved by who? The Minister of Natural Resources. If the land use plan gets developed, who's going to approve it? The Minister of Natural Resources. Of course, maybe there's a few other people in the background there, but we won't mention those right at this moment. But at each step of the line, the minister is holding the public purse, holding a bag of money, saying, "First Nations, come and sign on to your enslavement and we'll give you your 13 pieces of silver here." That's what they're saying: "Here's your bag of money, but you've got to do it the way we want you to, not what you want us to do."

Interjection.

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Mr. Randy Hillier: But we're talking about Liberals here, Minister.

The Minister of Natural Resources and her bureaucracy, her environmental friends, are the ones who are going to control and dictate development in northern Ontario. The people in the north are disregarded from any influence in the decision-making. Any influence is down here with, of course, Monte Hummel and the Minister of Natural Resources—they're driving this ship. The minister said it herself: "If there can't be agreement, if the native community chooses not to have a land use plan"—what did the minister say? She said, "There will be no development." That's what she said last week in committee. If you don't comply with our view of a land use plan, you will not get any development. There will be no mine. There will be no tourism. There will be no road. There will be no transmission corridor. There will be no hydroelectric power. Nothing will happen unless they succumb and agree.

It's not just myself. It's interesting, I think the members opposite should read some of the papers in the north. Read the Thunder Bay paper.

Here's an interesting one in the Thunder Bay paper: "Mauro and Gravelle won't flip-flop. They'll hold their ground, even when they're proved wrong, like the good Liberals they are." That's a quote from the Thunder Bay paper. We see that and, of course, we know who they're referencing in Thunder Bay. There are only two members up there.

Here's another one: "Lack of consultation and bullying by the province. But remember, our Mickie and Billie have stated that it is a good thing," in reference to Bill 191.

Those are the comments that are coming from northern Ontario—not just the industry, not just the municipalities, not just the First Nations. Every individual who lives in northern Ontario understands the failure of Bill 191. A quarter of a million square kilometres—that's a lot of territory to be handing off to the environmental people, that they now have control.

I'd like to just say, this government—all of Ontario, all our land is held in trust by the crown for the benefit of the people of Ontario, for everybody. They've not discharged their duty when they take nearly half of the land and put it in the control and use of a very small group: themselves, the bureaucracy at MNR and the environmental group. I guess Dalton McGuinty never watched Robin Hood when he was a kid. Or maybe Dalton just got it confused. He thinks he should take from everybody to give to a couple, a few. That's what Bill 191 is about—

Hon. James J. Bradley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The Speaker a few days ago indicated in this House that we're supposed to refer to people by their riding name or their title and not by their individual names.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That is a point order, but you will recall that the Speaker also said

that the Premier could be addressed by name, as the McGuinty government, something like that, so I'll be listening very carefully.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. It's good to see that the minister has not fallen asleep, has woken up there and is keenly listening to the debate. Of course, Speaker, I will be cognizant and try to be reflective.

It was interesting at the press conference today that the member from Timmins—James Bay held with members of the First Nations. There were two very interesting comments, that—and this is a quote—“McGuinty lied to us.” That's what was said at the press conference this morning.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'll caution the member that you can't say indirectly what you can't say directly. So please, be very careful of the context of your comment.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I understand, Speaker. This was a direct quote from the press conference today in the Legislative Assembly, but I think it's important.

The Liberal Party and the minister have said all along, “We're going to protect this land.” That's what they've said all along. They're going protect the land. I want to know who they're protecting it from. Is it protecting it from the Cree and Ojibway? Is that who they're protecting it from? Who are they protecting this plan from? Do they think the land is going to get up and walk away and that they have to do something to hold it there? I'll have to explain: The land is not going to go away, and neither are the Cree or Ojibway. They're not going to go away. You don't need to protect the land from them. What we need do is protect them from you. That's what really needs to happen: to protect northern Ontario from the actions of the MNR, the actions of Monte Hummel and the actions of Bill 191. That's what we really to have protect them from.

This is sheer and complete colonialism being demonstrated with Bill 191. It's nothing less than colonialism and a socialist undertaking to move over ownership of a quarter-million square kilometres of land.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Mr. Speaker, I guess we've woken them up again over there.

Even the Anglican Church is opposed to this Bill 191. Here it is: The Most Reverend Fred J. Hiltz, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, sent me a note that he is opposed to Bill 191.

Go back to the beginning, Minister. All the people are opposed and one person—we have to elevate him up pretty high—is in favour: Monte Hummel. That's what we see here. That is balancing competing interests by this Liberal government. Competing interests—that's how they balance it.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm going to phone the John Tory show.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Minister of Municipal Affairs. I see that you are in favour of John Tory. It's

good that you're moving off your socialist bench there a little bit.

We know that the future for northern Ontario is in peril and being jeopardized by Bill 191. First Nations have said very clearly that they will defend their interests, they will defend their territories. This partnership—what is a partnership when one side has to say we will defend against the other side. Is that really a partnership? Is that a partnership of respect?

The minister thinks she's got it right, and that's—I don't know. I know she mentioned that she had some gaps in knowledge, but how can anybody say that she's got it right when everybody is opposed? I think it's important that the Liberal Party reflect on just what damage you're doing with Bill 191, reflect on the consequences of your actions, reflect on this partnership that you are poisoning, not building. Bill 191 is—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. Now.

1650

Mr. Randy Hillier: Bill 191 is a travesty for northern Ontario. It's why the Liberals used time allocation to shut off debate, to prevent proper discussion and consultation with our northern First Nations. We now see what the motivator behind Bill 191 truly is. The Ontario PC Party has said—our leader has said—that come October 2011, when we're successful in the election, we will repeal Bill 191.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to say a few words on this bill, on behalf of the New Democrats, but mostly on behalf of the First Nations peoples in the constituency of Kenora—Rainy River, whom I can say are unanimously opposed to this legislation. But I want to begin with a letter from the United Church. It reads as follows:

“Premier McGuinty,

“As president and executive secretary of Manitou Conference of the United Church of Canada, representing 83 United Church congregations in northeastern Ontario, we are writing to express our deep concern over the proposed Bill 191, the Far North Act.

“Manitou Conference stands in solidarity with the Nishnawbe Aski Nation in opposing Bill 191, which we believe disrespects First Nations' jurisdiction in our area and may indeed violate existing treaties.

“We respectfully call on the government of Ontario to postpone introduction of Bill 191 until informed consent is received from the affected NAN First Nations.”

I want to say that the United Church doesn't have any interest in this. It doesn't own any mining stocks that I'm aware of; it's not interested in developing a mine somewhere.

I want to read from the Anglican Church of Canada:

“To all members of the provincial Parliament of Ontario,

"The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, September 13, 2007, article 32:

"(1) Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.

"(2) States shall consult and co-operate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources.

"(3) States shall provide effective mechanisms for just and fair redress for any such activities, and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural or spiritual impact."

"So in solidarity with Nishnawbe Aski Nation, I make this appeal: Respect the rights of indigenous peoples, honour the Canadian constitution, keep your promises as Premier and legislators, and renew commitment to consultation.

"Yours sincerely,

"The Most Reverend Fred Hiltz, Primate,

"The Anglican Church of Canada."

As far as I know, the Anglican Church doesn't own any mining stocks, either. They don't have any hot properties north of the 51st parallel in Ontario. But they're trying to offer this government their hard experience. I say "their hard experience," because they were part of the last ugly exercise of neo-colonialism on First Nations. I'm speaking here of the residential schools, where some people in Ottawa who thought they were really, really smart said, "We're going to tell you how your kids are going to be educated, you people who live in remote First Nations. They're going to go to residential schools." And, yes, the Anglican Church was part of that sorry history, and the United Church and the Catholic Church. And First Nations who said, "We don't like this; we don't think it's right" were told, "You just shut up. We'll tell you. We're the morally and intellectually superior people in Ottawa, and we'll tell you what's good for you."

You go and talk to the Anglican Church today about how they feel about that experience, something which is a social debacle, which has affected the lives of literally thousands of young people and continues to go on, the after-effects. It was people who thought that they were socially and intellectually superior and that they could tell First Nations people living on remote reserves what was good for them. Well, I ask you: Sit down and compare this legislation with the residential schools and tell me where the difference is.

First Nations have unanimously come to you and said, "Don't do this." What this government is doing is exactly what happened with the residential schools. Someone who thinks that they are intellectually and morally superior, here in Toronto, thinks that you can decide what is

good and what is not good for First Nations who live north of the 51st parallel: where they can do something, where they can't do something, how it shall be done.

This is the greatest exercise of neo-colonialism since the residential schools. I can say, and First Nations have been saying to you, the British Colonial Office lives today in the McGuinty government.

Interjections.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to remind the members opposite of what First Nations have been saying.

The McGuinty government says that the Far North Act creates a partnership with First Nations. This is what First Nations say: They say the government isn't telling the truth. The act does not create a partnership; it creates a rigged game where Ontario holds all the cards. At every single step of the planning process, Ontario's approval is necessary to proceed. Once a plan is approved and in place, Ontario can overrule it. Ontario controls the purse strings for the costs of planning, so Ontario can sabotage the process whenever it likes.

The act doesn't create a new relationship. It cements the old one, where First Nations are treated like wards of the state. That's what NAN is saying.

"Can you give some examples of how Ontario has rigged the game?" This is what NAN says: The first step in the planning process is to create a terms of reference for the land use plan. To do this, the minister must make an order, at her discretion. So if Ontario doesn't like the way the terms of reference look, the minister won't approve them and the planning process dies right there.

Once the terms of reference are approved, the land use plan gets drafted and presented for approval, but once again the minister has the discretion. The minister can approve or reject the plan. If the minister rejects, the process dies and the land use plan never goes into effect.

First Nations are asking, "How is this a partnership?" How is this a partnership when all of the discretion sits with a minister in Toronto?

Next question: "Can the First Nations plan the way they want to plan?" NAN's response: "No." The act ensures that Ontario can control the whole planning process through a set of policies and regulations that Ontario calls the Far North land use strategy. Land use plans have to conform to the Far North land use strategy. It's the rule book by which the game is played. And who controls the Far North land use strategy? Do First Nations have any control? None. Ontario controls it.

"Don't First Nations have some say in the policies and strategies for land use planning?" NAN's position: Not really. The act allows for First Nations' participation, but if you read the act closely, all Ontario has to do is listen. Ultimately, the minister retains sole discretion to decide what does and doesn't go into the Far North land use strategy.

1700

Now, some might be wondering, "Well, why would First Nations not trust the government on these things?" We need only look at some recent history. Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug—it's a First Nation

community—said to a company called Platinex, “Look, our community is not ready for mining exploration or mining development. We don’t want you in our territory.” The response of Platinex was to sue the First Nation for \$11 billion and then to go to court and ask that the leadership of the First Nation be put in jail. Who was part and parcel with the mining company, asking that the judge impose a penalty to hurt the First Nation? Why, it was the McGuinty government; they’re part and parcel. What happened? The chief, who is a very reasonable guy, a very thoughtful fellow, a very quiet fellow, spent over two months in jail; so did most of his councillors. My God, a 65-year-old great-grandmother was put in jail by this government because she dared to stand up to a mining company.

Now, when the court of appeal got ahold of this decision, they threw it out. I happened to go down to Queen Street to the court that day, to hear the judges question this government’s lawyer—the government sent a junior lawyer, I think because they recognized they didn’t have a leg to stand on. But the justices who heard the appeal were embarrassed by this government’s position.

But it didn’t end there. This government later signed an agreement with the mining company giving the mining company millions of dollars of compensation. Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, who had to use money from their health budget, their education budget, even their sports and recreation budget to fight the McGuinty government in court, what did they get? Nada. Nothing. No compensation whatsoever. And what was the audacity of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug? To stand up and defend their constitutional and aboriginal rights. The mining company gets millions of dollars of compensation and the poor First Nation is almost bankrupted by that company and this government.

But it doesn’t end there. The Environmental Commissioner points out—and he had a study of what has been going on: “The report also found that ineffective government oversight allowed service companies to illegally construct a mining camp and airstrips without approvals. These cases raise legitimate concerns that the government is either unaware of, or turning a blind eye to, mining-related activities that undermine the effectiveness of land use planning in the Far North.”

Do you know what? Do you know who finally had to force the government to take action against the illegal airstrip that they allowed to be created? The chief of Neskantaga First Nation had to write to the Minister of Natural Resources and say, “Why don’t you enforce your own regulations?” And you wonder why First Nations don’t trust this government? You wonder why they say this is another exercise in neo-colonialism, the greatest exercise in neo-colonialism since the imposition of residential schools on First Nations? Look at the sorry record of this government.

This government peddles to the Toronto Star that they’ve been consulting with First Nations when unanimously, First Nations leaders come here and say, “No such consultation has taken place.” None, zero. That’s

why they don’t trust this government. Any government that would run around southern Ontario peddling that they’ve consulted with First Nations and that they have the consent of First Nations when those First Nations come here in person and say, “There has been no such consultation”—small wonder that they don’t trust the government of the day.

So I will be voting against this legislation. I will vote against it because it is such a travesty. First Nations are not opposed to protected areas. God knows, they’ve done a far better job protecting the area north of the 51st parallel than all of us, in our moral and intellectual superiority, have done south of the 51st parallel. That’s evident. Just look at the map.

I will be voting against this because it is an offence against the United Nations declaration, because it’s an offence against Canadian constitutional law, but mostly, I’ll vote against it because colonialism should have died a long, long, long time ago. The day when some bureaucrat or indeed some self-styled environmentalist in Toronto can stand up and say, “Well, I’m morally and intellectually superior to you and I’ll tell you what’s good for you. I’ll tell you what can happen here and what can’t happen there,” and all you’re allowed to do is to state your opposition—“But we don’t have to listen to you; we can overrule you”—that’s wrong. That is wrong. Every member of this Legislature who votes for this legislation should hang their head in shame.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. David Oraziatti: I’m pleased to rise today with respect to third reading debate on Bill 191. I will address some of the comments that were made by the members that have spoken—the members from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and Kenora–Rainy River—in a few minutes.

But first I want to get some comments on the record with respect to the bill. First of all, this is a tremendously important bill for the province of Ontario and, in particular, for the peoples of the Far North. I want to take a minute and just recognize the efforts of our Minister of Natural Resources, her personal efforts and the lengths that she has gone to to travel to many locations in the Far North and sit down for days and days and days and discuss this particular bill and the contents of this bill with First Nations in the Far North.

This bill, as you know, went out for consultation in between first and second reading; that is something that rarely takes place in the Legislature. Many bills don’t travel. For many bills, the hearings are held here, if there are hearings. So this bill travelled to the Far North between first and second reading. The result of that and ongoing discussions were 43 amendments—

Mr. Howard Hampton: Which First Nations?

Mr. David Oraziatti: I can hear the member opposite talking about this process, and I am so surprised that despite all of the opposition and the rhetoric from the member opposite, there was not a single amendment proposed by the member opposite—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member from Kenora–Rainy River, I think you've asked enough times, and I've let you ask, so, please.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Can we hear?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm not sure whether you can or not, but when everyone is speaking out, I can't.

Member for Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. David Oraziatti: Thank you, Speaker. It would be great to be able to get some of these comments on the record.

As I was saying, following the discussions, visits, calls and meetings, we ended up with 43 amendments, 43 changes to this particular bill, because we're listening. Despite the opposition and the passionate plea that this bill not be passed, the opposition members proposed none, zero; no amendments, no proposed changes, because they didn't think they had any ideas to offer that were constructive to this bill—none; no amendments. So I think that it's really important that the First Nations know that these individuals are purportedly representing them, but they offered nothing constructive to this bill, no proposed amendments. In fact, they walked out of committee without any proposed amendments.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the process that got us to the point today, and some of the many benefits that can be gained from this historic legislation. The potential benefits of this legislation are very clear: first of all, protection of the Far North region that would set an example for the rest of the world in terms of biodiversity and conservation and the fight against global climate change; also, community-based land use planning that would give First Nations in the Far North the leading decision-making ability to make decisions around their land use planning as it affects their communities, their culture and their way of life. It would also mean sustainable development in the Far North with respect to the rich natural resources that we have in our province. That would help to promote a more prosperous economic future for the people of the Far North and benefit the province as a whole.

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The reality is that the Far North is facing immense development pressure today. The member from Kenora–Rainy River referenced Platinex. In his Far North world, these types of conflicts would continue to go on. They would go on and on and on, because he offers no constructive solutions, no land use planning, no opportunity for First Nations to decide for themselves how to plan their communities. Instead, we'd continue to have conflicts. That's the member opposite's view of where we should go.

It's important that we provide the tools and resources that would allow the people who live in the Far North to plan their development. Ontario has waited long enough and the people of the Far North have waited long enough for the joint planning process they need to ensure that

this vast and remarkable region remains an environmental and economic asset. The best way to make certain we are on the right path is to have the First Nations communities in the Far North lead the planning of their communities. Working jointly with First Nations on community land use planning is central to the purpose of Bill 191 and key to its success.

Despite the vast natural resource potential in the Far North, there is currently very little economic and industrial activity. But there is tremendous potential, and opportunity is knocking. In the coming decades, the region will undoubtedly see more people, more pressure and more economic development. We need to act now and certainly with some urgency to establish clear and open land use planning directions that would ensure that development of the Far North's resources is orderly and sustainable, meets our protection objectives and provides certainty for both First Nations and industry. Bill 191 would work in conjunction with policies and legislation already in place, including the northern growth plan, the Green Energy Act and the Mining Act, to provide an unparalleled opportunity to act strategically and ensure that development in the Far North is environmentally sustainable.

As a northerner, I understand the importance of creating opportunities for regional and community infrastructure development in northern Ontario. I'm excited about the potential for jobs for local First Nations communities and for the increased value-added manufacturing opportunities throughout the Far North. We've already seen the economic spin-off potential and the benefits from the development of the De Beers diamond mine near Attawapiskat. Having had the opportunity to visit the mine site and talk to the local First Nations working there, they, too, are excited about the new opportunities that have come to their community.

We're looking forward to similar mineral development in the Ring of Fire area, which alone could mean thousands of direct and indirect permanent jobs, construction jobs over the next five years and significant economic development opportunities for many First Nation communities in the region. In fact, last week Minister Jeffrey and Minister Gravelle signed a letter of intent with two First Nations in proximity to the Ring of Fire area: Marten Falls and Webequie First Nations, the two largest and most affected Ring of Fire communities. This document is the first formal step toward a memorandum of co-operation for mineral development, including land use planning, in the area.

The two First Nation communities in the Ring of Fire have expressed their interest in both economic development and environmental protection, the two core premises of the bill. MNR is working with communities and the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry to address the opportunities and challenges in the Ring of Fire area. The land use planning process in the Ring of Fire area will help make wise decisions about the environmentally sustainable use of natural resources while protecting areas of ecological and cultural value.

Through community land use planning, Ontario will work jointly with First Nations to establish a collaborative approach to planning that will guide development on lands in the Ring of Fire area and throughout the Far North.

Minister Jeffrey has outlined for us the bill before the House today and that it reflects significant input and collaboration from many sources and interests. As said earlier, that reflection has allowed for 43 amendments to move forward. Some of the amendments—probably the most pertinent—include giving First Nations the opportunity to have final approval of community land use plans. First Nations will have the opportunity to finalize and approve, with their chiefs and band councils, those land use plans. Referencing the aboriginal treaty rights in the “purpose” statement of the legislation was also critically important, and that was added.

Again, we want to be crystal clear: This legislation is about land use planning, and in fact, 34 of 38 First Nations in the Far North are already engaged in land use planning. This is happening today; this is not something new. Land use planning, in partnership with the Ontario government and 34 First Nations in the province of Ontario, is taking place today. This legislation provides a framework for that discussion and for those land use plans. This is really important: 90% of First Nations in the Far North are already engaged in land use planning.

Part of the issue—and I know that the opposition raised this—is that this bill will somehow supersede constitutional treaty rights of First Nations. The fact of the matter is, it won't. It's not designed to do that and it can't do that. The priority is obviously that constitutional rights for First Nations in the Far North supersede this legislation. We understand that. That's why it's in the “purpose” statement.

Important amendments also include having discussions with First Nations in the Far North on establishing a joint body with equal representation from the province and First Nations to advise them on land use planning issues. Adding the recognition of the First Nations' contribution of their traditional knowledge and perspectives on protection and conservation is also key to this bill and has been added as part of that series or group of amendments, expanding the types of development that may be pursued, such as wind and water power facilities and hydro transmission lines, while land use planning is underway—contrary to the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington's comments around “shutting down” development in the Far North, “stopping” development in the Far North.

We know that First Nations want development in the Far North. They want to participate fully in the economy of this province and they want the opportunity for their young people and their families to grow up with those opportunities. We want to make sure that happens as well.

I want to talk a little bit about the joint advisory body. After first reading, an amendment was made to Bill 191 to provide for a joint body to advise on land use plan-

ning, with equal representation from First Nations and the province. The amendment also included a commitment to talk with interested First Nations before setting up the joint body, and that it would only be established once there was agreement on its role and its functions. This is not something that's being imposed; we want to know from the First Nations how they want to do this, how many members they would like and what the role and function of this committee is going to be so that this truly is a joint process.

First Nations have requested that their role in land use planning be extended to all aspects of planning, such as developing the Far North land use strategy. We are proposing changes that would tie the joint body to making recommendations on policy statements and providing advice on other components of the Far North land use strategy. The proposed amendment stipulates that the joint body may provide advice on matters such as the allocation of funding and appropriate dispute resolution processes to support land use planning in the Far North. With this proposed motion, we are responding to First Nations' interests in working with Ontario to develop broad policy direction for the Far North that will support their community-based land use planning efforts.

With respect to the northern growth plan, another amendment that was put forward was added in response to First Nations' concerns with respect to the northern growth plan, that it may somehow override land use planning. It will clearly not. Ontario has been clear that the government's intent is that the northern growth plan will not take priority over community land use plans but, in fact, incorporate their land use plans into the northern growth plan.

Development with concurrent planning: In response to concerns that land use planning could hold up economic development until community-based plans are in place, an amendment was proposed that would allow for a broader range of developments to be pursued while planning is underway. These could include a wind or water power generation facility, transmission facilities and lines, and all-weather transportation infrastructure. Typically, these developments would require the support of First Nations and a draft plan to be completed before construction begins.

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There are also special alternatives for wind and water power and electrical transmission distribution systems. This approach would allow more types of development to proceed concurrently with land use planning.

Another key amendment was put forward in response to First Nations' concern over cabinet's ability to override the joint planning process. Ontario is proposing that before the Lieutenant Governor in Council could make an exception, the Minister of Natural Resources must seek to work through a six-month plan with the First Nation group. First Nations will obviously play the leading role in developing the land use plan, and before making an exception to a community land use plan, the Lieutenant Governor in Council would continue to have

to take into account those objectives of the First Nations for land use planning and determine whether or not the development is in the social and economic interests of the province.

I think it's very, very important to be clear on a couple of things. This bill does not supersede in any way the constitutional rights that have been entrenched in this country for First Nations. This bill proposed 43 amendments and, despite the opposition from the other side, there was not a single amendment proposed for this bill. So I have some concerns about the opposition railing against a bill and offering nothing constructive with respect to the direction of this bill.

We've got 43 amendments. We've got those amendments because we sat down with First Nation communities across the province and in the Far North and discussed those and came up with these amendments.

I think it's important to be clear that in the Far North it is incredibly pressing at this point that we provide some assurances for all who live in the Far North. First Nation communities, economic development interests, the government of Ontario—everyone wants certainty. If we didn't want certainty in the Far North, we wouldn't have 34 First Nation groups engaged with the province on land use planning. So let's not twist the bill out of context. Let's not say it has some kind of other implication to First Nation jurisdiction, because it doesn't, and let's be clear about what we're talking about. This bill is talking about land use planning for First Nations. This is about the province of Ontario providing the First Nations with the resources they need so they can develop land use plans that they want to see in place. We cannot continue in the province to have conflict in the Far North.

The other side of the House might think that's okay, might think the situations that arose with Platinex are acceptable. On this side of the House we don't agree with that. We want to make sure there's certainty.

Support the bill. I call on the other members opposite to support this bill, because we cannot go on in this province, with the opposition's position on this, to continue to ignore the conflicts that arise around a lack of land use planning and a lack of certainty. This bill supports First Nations' interests and puts their priorities when it comes to land use planning front and centre.

I want to encourage all members in the House to support this bill. It's a good bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate on third reading of Bill 191, in the limited time that I have for this debate. I listened attentively to the member for Sault Ste. Marie and his address. I did hear a bit of the minister earlier; unfortunately, I had to be out of the House for a good portion of that.

The minister talked about the extensive consultations. In the limited time I did hear, I heard the phrase "First Nations." I lost count of the number of times she used the term "First Nations," implying that First Nations somehow have their fingerprints on this bill—and they may,

but it will probably only be because it's been handed to them and they've handed it back and said, "You've got it all wrong."

What I find very troubling about this is why the government would insist on moving ahead with this at the speed that they want to do it when it is so absolutely, unequivocally clear that the people who will be most affected by this legislation do not support it, period. They're not talking about minor amendments—and yes, the government did put forth their 43 amendments, and neither of the opposition parties did propose amendments because they concluded, based on their discussions with stakeholders, including First Nations, that this bill was just all wrong.

Earlier, before we recessed for the summer, the minister talked about—this is the kind of spin my colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington talked about. He talked about Liberal spin. I recall when the minister told the House that she had met with Stan Beardy, and then it turned out that the meeting with Stan Beardy was actually—they basically bumped into one another in the Thunder Bay airport. Most people wouldn't consider that a meeting. When they think of a meeting with a minister, they think that it is something that is scheduled and where there's an opportunity for both parties in the discussion to have a substantive exchange of views and ideas on the subject of the day, not a chance meeting in the Thunder Bay airport.

Granted, the minister has been up north through the summer recess, but if she had gotten it right, we wouldn't have the folks from the First Nations visiting Queen's Park on a number of occasions, in the late summer and now into the fall, expressing their absolute opposition to the government's decision to move forward with this legislation at this time.

You'll recall that during the summer there were hearings scheduled in the north. I believe it was five or six communities that were on the docket to be visited for hearings on this bill, and they were cancelled. I believe it was Stan Beardy who sent a letter to the minister saying, "We have not been given adequate time to prepare for these hearings." Instead of looking for a way to make those dates more suitable to the members of First Nations, the minister cancelled the hearings. The hearings were cancelled.

When the member from Sault Ste. Marie talks about trying to avoid conflicts and trying to change the dynamics and the tenor or the tone of the debate—what do you say to someone on the other side of the House or the other side of the argument, if you want to call it that? "We're cancelling your opportunity to present your case."

We presented the government with an option. In my role as opposition House leader, I sent the government House leader a letter asking her to have those hearings re-established so that this bill could have a proper vetting throughout the northern communities that would be most affected—First Nations, yes, and not just First Nations

but all kinds of other stakeholders in the North who unanimously have said that this bill is wrong.

What was the government's response? "No. We're proceeding with our plan." The member for Sault Ste. Marie talked about conflict. Why would a government want to move forward on a piece of legislation where the only people who were consulted prior to the introduction of this bill were people who wanted to see stoppage or, at the very least, significant limits, to development in the north? There were no discussions with those people who actually live in the north, no discussions with those people who actually depend upon the north to make their living. Those kinds of one-sided discussions only make people in the north more dubious and suspicious when it comes to examining the motives of the government. Is the government looking at what is best for the north, the future of the north and its ability to develop in a proper way, or was it counting votes?

1730

We understand that the north is not very well populated. Everyone knows that: It's a vast tract of land. I haven't had the privilege—maybe it's something I should take the opportunity to do someday—to drive through the entire north and get to western Canada. I haven't done that. But anybody who has just tells me, "You cannot believe how big northern Ontario is." It's farther from Ottawa to the Manitoba border than it is from the eastern Manitoba border to British Columbia. That's how big it is.

Why don't these people who want to take control of the north actually spend some time in the north talking to those people who are going to be so dramatically affected? This is going to change the way life is in the north for decades to come, so why would the government not ensure that the people who are most directly affected be the ones—if they're not signing off on this bill, there must be a good reason.

We've never gotten this far in a bill where those stakeholders who are so greatly affected have not in some way said, "You know what? We're ready to proceed. We think we can work with this. We're not entirely happy." Nobody's ever entirely happy with a government bill, because there are going to be some winners, there are going to be some losers and there are going to be some people who gain less or more, but at the end of the day the rest of the people might be able to say, "We can work with this." But that's not what you're hearing on this bill. It's unilateral: The people in the north do not support this bill. You folks have not gotten to the people who are actually affected by this bill.

When you're bringing forth a piece of legislation, your motivation should not simply be, "Okay, what does Toronto want? What do the five million people in and around the GTA want?" And when you use words and phrases—I listened to the minister and I'll paraphrase, because I didn't exactly get it—like "economic" or "environmentally sound sustainable development"—and I read this Toronto Star editorial that supported the Far North Act. When you use phrases like that, you know

what the average person who lives in a condominium—or if you're a landowner in Toronto, you might have an acre. If you have a big lot in Toronto, you might have an acre. Come to the real world up north of the 401 and see what people live on. But when you make statements like this to the average person in Toronto—and I'm not judging them negatively. They just don't understand what life is actually like up there. "Up there," as they say. When you use those kinds of phrases, why wouldn't they say that this is a good thing? Who could ever be opposed to environmentally sound, sustainable development? Who could ever be opposed to that? But you imply that this delivers on that, and the people who are most greatly affected by it are saying to you, "Absolutely not." It is a partnership that is totally—it's not a partnership because you have made it one-sided. A partnership actually has to have some equality of relationship. This one doesn't. We will not support it—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I wish I could say that I take pleasure in having to stand here today to speak on this particular bill and this particular initiative. Unfortunately, I can't say it's with any pleasure that I have to participate in this debate because I'm sad for the opportunity that we're missing in trying to do something that I think all of us in this Legislature and everybody, by a vast majority, in the north wants, which is to develop some sort of mechanism so that when there's development to be had in the Far North, it happens in a way that, first of all, benefits First Nations and second of all, ensures the protection of our land for future generations. Unfortunately the bill does neither, so therefore it is, I think, a great failure and is quite frankly missing a great opportunity that we have.

Before I get into debate, I just want to respond to a couple of things that were said by government members in regard to this bill. One of them was made by one of the members who said, "Well, you know, if the opposition was so sincere, if the opposition was so serious and cared so much about this bill, they would have put forward amendments." Listen, it's a simple reason why we didn't put amendments: We don't support the bill. Why should I try to amend what is a flawed bill and something that the First Nations, the chambers of commerce, the municipalities and others across the north—the mining companies and the PDAC—have said is a flawed process? The government has got it wrong, and they're the only ones still standing who think they've got it right. So if we didn't present amendments, that was the reason.

The other thing is that the parliamentary assistant took great pleasure in saying, "Oh, but there are 34 communities in the Far North that are doing land use plans." Yes. But are any of them going to be accepted under this bill? No. Because at the end of the day, the minister has the discretion within the bill to determine when a land use plan is going to start, who is going to sit on these joint committees to deal with it and what will be the values that will be in the plan, and that will be the problem.

Because if any of you knew what a land use plan was from the perspective of a First Nations community—it's not the same type of thing that you see in a municipality. The values they are trying to protect and the things they are trying to achieve are quite different.

So for the parliamentary assistant to say, as a way of rounding out the argument why this legislation is so good, that 34 communities in the Far North working on land use plans is an admission that this is a good act—listen, those are their land use plans that they are working on, based on their values, their needs, their wants and their aspirations. This bill doesn't achieve that, and these communities, quite frankly, will not be able to introduce and keep most of what they've already built into the process of land use planning that they've done.

The other thing I want to say—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The member across the way—you're so learned. Not true. Look at Grand Chief Stan Loutit. Take a look at Margaret from Shebandowan. Take a look at the people that are here from the chamber of commerce. Tell them it's not true. You'd better wave back. You'd better know what you're talking about, because you don't, sir, and if you don't know what you're talking about, don't participate in the debate. Stand up and say it when you get a chance.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Lou, you should know better.

I say to the members across the way, if there's a land use planning process that is happening now, it's not because it's an admission on the part of First Nations that they support Bill 191. It is the fact that First Nations have been wanting to do land use plans, have been working on land use plans, but the missing component has been that the provincial government has not been there to support their needs.

The government has put forward \$14 million and then another \$10 million to support the land use planning process, to the minister who commented on that when she was making her opening statements—we have put in place all this money in order to support the land use planning process. How many millions of dollars do you think those 34 communities have already spent? Far more than you've put on the table now. So we've probably got about 6% of the money that's needed to do land use plans in all 49 NAN communities. How are we going to be able to achieve land use plans if communities cannot be funded? So I say to the minister across the way, okay, \$14 million plus \$10 million somehow is going to achieve land use planning in all of the Far North communities? Listen, it's a drop in the bucket; it ain't gonna happen.

I say to the minister across the way that if you're serious about land use planning, go back to the drawing board, have discussions with the people it affects, draft legislation that's acceptable by both parties, and properly fund it and allow the proper time needed to make things happen in a way that works for First Nations and works for the province and other interests.

I also want to say, on the issue of the money put forward, that we know that a large percentage of the money that has already been earmarked by the provincial government toward land use planning, that has been announced by this government, has not gone out the door to First Nations. I believe that only about 14% of what has been allocated has actually gone out to the First Nations, from the numbers I've got. I may stand to be corrected. I see a friend of mine from the Ministry of Natural Resources here, and she would know the number. But we have not allocated the full amount of money that was earmarked for land use plans as it is. I just say to the government across the way that this is a half-hearted measure to be seen as doing something that at the end of the day is not achieving the needs you want.

Let me make this point: We have a golden opportunity. There is golden opportunity in northern Ontario to do what's right. I was talking earlier to one of the NAN representatives, and the person said to me, "Are you getting any backlash back home from people who may be opposed to what you're doing in the House in defence of First Nations?" I said, "No. There's been a shift in public opinion in northern Ontario over the last 10 years, where people understand that you cannot have development in these communities without First Nations benefiting."

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People understand here, in their gut, that if there's going to be a mine that's developed in Attawapiskat or Marten Falls or wherever it might be, there needs to be some kind of a mechanism that ensures that the First Nations are going to be able to benefit from that economic activity, and that there needs to be some rules about how it happens so that we protect our environment. People understand that. In the north, we have built a consensus around that point. The mining industry understands it. Take a look at the actions of De Beers Canada; take a look at the actions of Detour Gold; take a look at the actions of Lake Shore Gold and other companies that currently have or are currently negotiating impact benefit agreements with those First Nations communities.

This brings me to the point of consultation. The government says that it's gone out and consulted because the minister flew into eight communities, said hi, then met somebody in an airport and had a conversation, and somehow we've consulted. Do you know how much money De Beers spent? You can shake your head, but do you know how much money De Beers spent in consultation that eventually led to an agreement with the community of Attawapiskat and a ratification of that particular agreement? They spent about \$25 million. The private sector, De Beers Canada, said, "We understand. We can't develop a mine in Attawapiskat unless we have an agreement with the community. It has to be done with their consent." Well, God, if De Beers Canada can understand that you don't develop a mine without the consent of First Nations, where the heck is the government of Ontario?

More to the point, De Beers Canada spent \$25 million by flying people in and out of the communities, holding

various types of meetings, bringing in experts, holding community meetings etc. in order to eventually negotiate what became the IBA that was ratified by the community of Attawapiskat. So if they understand what consultation is, Madam Minister, maybe you should go talk to De Beers or Detour Lake or other mining interests or hydro development projects that have actually done real consultation with First Nations on the point of being able to develop.

Ontario Power Generation is now redeveloping the Lower Mattagami River basin. They're spending \$2.7 billion on this redevelopment. They've done that with the agreement of Moose Cree First Nation. And what did it take? It took numerous meetings on the part of Ontario Power Generation with the chief and council, with community members in Moose Factory, in Timmins, in Cochrane, in Kapuskasing and different communities where Moose Cree members live. Then there was an exchange of information, an exchange of ideas. There were negotiations, and eventually there were two votes to finally ratify the agreement that allows OPG to do the development.

If one arm of the government, Ontario Power Generation, can understand that consultation doesn't mean, "Oh, I saw you at the airport. How's it going? I've consulted. And by the way, I flew to eight of your communities, and somehow or other, that's consultation," why doesn't the government of Ontario understand that true consultation, from the perspective of First Nations, means you engage, you discuss, you allow people to think about it, you allow the communities to come back to you and tell you what they think needs to be part of the discussion for a final decision on whatever has to be made, and then there needs to be ratification by the community or the territory if the project is big enough? I just wanted to start my comments by saying that, just for the record.

I want to say that what is really sad about this is that this government has not recognized that First Nations have always understood, since the signing of the treaty in 1905, that they have never ceded the land to Ontario or the Canadian crown. It was an understanding—and the documents prove it, within the treaty and within the documents from the treaty commissioners—that when they signed the treaty with the First Nations in the Far North, there would be a sharing of the land. This is the principle and this is the point that all of this has to do with when it comes to the First Nations. They have never ceded the land. How they see this particular bill, Bill 191, is the government trying to do by stealth what they were not able to do by treaty. That's the effect of this bill.

First Nations have understood from the very beginning that there will be a sharing of the land, but here's the problem: The first 100-plus years of the treaty have not done very well for our First Nations. Some of you have taken up my invitation and have travelled to the Far North, into communities such as Marten Falls, Attawapiskat, Pikangikum, Sandy Lake and others, and have seen how difficult life is in those communities. You have

housing where there are upwards of 20 people who have to live in a house to stay out of the cold and out of the rain. You're trying to have kids in a house of 20 people study so they can go to school and make a better life for themselves in the future. In a house of 20 individuals, how do you do that? You have no recreational facility of sorts in most of the communities. I don't think any of our communities in the Far North have pavement. You have poor infrastructure. You've got high prices. You've got no roads into pretty well all of the communities.

It is really a desperate situation as far as the way of life in a lot of our communities is concerned, and we're talking about poverty. I invite people to come into some of our communities and look around. Great people; resilient—man, the sense of humour. You've got to have a sense of humour if you live in some of these communities, or all of our communities, unfortunately.

But the point is that in the first 100 years of the treaty, there has been no benefit of significance that has been given to the First Nations. We have developed mine after mine. We have developed hydro project after hydro project. We have cut down forest after forest. We have replanted trees. We have done numerous things of economic activity in the north, and the first 100 years of treaty have provided nothing but misery and poverty for our communities.

The new generation that is coming up today is saying, "Not for me." They're telling their leaders not to repeat what has happened to the previous generations; that they will not stand idly by and watch development swoop by their communities and be left in the trail of dust and misery, with no economic opportunity for them.

I listened to Margaret on a conference call that we had just yesterday. The elders are very clear in the direction that they're trying to give the leadership. They're saying, "Listen, what has happened up to now hasn't worked and we need to, ourselves as a nation, get people to understand, first, that we never relinquished title on the land, and that we need to do what needs to be done to protect our interests. And if Ontario is not going to protect our interests insofar as what they do in Bill 191, well then, we're going to have to do what we're going to have to do to protect that interest." That was clear today in the press conference with representatives from Mushkegowuk Tribal Council and Shebandowan—I got it right; I always want to say the French word because I'm français, as you know—in regard to where things go from here.

I say to the government: You've missed a golden opportunity. First Nations have told you, the chambers of commerce have told you, the communities in northern Ontario have told you and the citizens have told you that there is a way to move forward that would allow us to achieve all our goals, and that is, to make sure that First Nations are made whole and they can enjoy the benefits of the economic activity that will happen on their land, that they have a say about how the development's going to happen and that we protect the environment for the years to come. The only one who doesn't want to do this,

it would appear, is the government by way of this legislation.

Let me get into the bill quickly, because I've only got about 10 minutes. The government has been saying through all of this that, first of all, they've consulted. I just want to make clear that there really has not been any consultation. I say to the minister, with all respect, yes, you did go to eight communities, and that is appreciated. Any time a minister of the crown or a member of this House goes into the communities, it is greatly appreciated on the part of the communities, but don't think that's consultation. Consultation is quite something else.

But the government time-allocated this bill and then said to us in opposition, "You have a day or two in order to decide which four communities we're going to go to in the Far North to consult." Who am I to decide, as a member of the Legislature, which communities we're going to go to? They're not my 49 NAN communities. We should have allowed NAN to make that decision. I think what they would have come back and said is, "Well, four days isn't enough." But then to make matters worse, the government says, "You have two weeks in order to organize these hearings," and there wasn't enough time, so the hearings never took place. The government says they've consulted—hardly the case.

Next, the government says—and I read this in the *Toronto Star* with great interest on the weekend. They've said this time and time again through the questions that were answered by the Premier, the minister and the parliamentary assistant on this issue. They say, "You know what? We have amended the legislation. If you look at Bill 191, as printed, we made all these amendments to make it better."

Let's really look at what you've done. Bill 191, as it stands, under section 11 says the following: that if you have a community that has no land use plan, there will be no development. Understand what we're saying in this bill: that if a community decides they're not going to participate in the land use plan, and the First Nations have told you by majority that they won't, there will be no development allowed in their territory.

1750

Already we've got a problem, and that is, it's going to create great uncertainty for the mining and other sectors who are trying to do work in the Far North. Communities are going to be put in the position of saying no because they're not happy with what you've given them under Bill 191. Money is going to fly from Ontario to other jurisdictions when it comes to investment for exploration and others. And who loses? First Nations lose and this province loses as a result.

But here's the thing: Let's say, in the end, that the community decides it's not going to participate in the land use plan and the government decides, "You know what? This mine and the Ring of Fire are really important and we've got to make it go." Under subsection 11(4), the government can do an exemption order that would in fact supersede the refusal of the community to do the land use planning process in order that the project be

allowed to go forward. So what protection does the First Nation really have? You're saying, on the one hand, you can't have development unless you have a land use plan, and I guess that's a way of trying to force them into the land use planning process. It's a bit of a threat: If you want some money to do land use planning and you want development in your community, you've got to do a land use plan, but the government reserves the right under subsection 11(4) to exempt the order in order to allow the development to go forward.

Let's say a community decides they're going to go forward, and that works out in sections 10, 11 and 12. What we have is a rigged game. First of all, who's going to sit on the committee, this joint committee that we talked to on the part of the First Nation, can be refused by the minister in this section of the act. The minister can say, "Well, Moose Cree, you want so-and-so to be on this particular land use planning process? We don't like him," or her. "Nope, they're not on for you." The minister reserves the right.

Let's say that we do get a joint committee done and everybody agrees and we go forward. For the values that are given as far as the terms of reference, of what will be in the land use plan, it's the minister who has the final say about what will be accepted in the terms of reference. Yes, the communities have a say; I accept that. I understand. I've read the act. The community has a real say about what are going to be the terms of reference. But the minister, at the end of the day, has got to sign off, because she too has equal power to the community.

So you have a rigged process right from the start. The Premier of the province or the minister can say, "I can tell you who I will accept, yes or no, on the joint committee," and then once the terms of reference are drawn, can refuse or accept what the terms of reference will be. It's a rigged process, and that's why the First Nations don't want to get into it.

Which brings me to my point on the comments by the Minister of the Environment when he was heckling; comments, I think, to the speech of one of the members in the opposition. I forget which one. He said, "Well, that's how we've done things for 50 years in municipalities." Well, my God, he finally admitted what the minister wouldn't admit, which is that the province controls the process. Because, yes, you're right: In a land use planning process under the *Municipal Act*, the province controls the process. What the Minister of the Environment finally admitted is what the minister has been trying to deny for this whole time, which is that the province will control the process of land use planning when it comes to First Nations territories. Well, let me tell you, a municipality and—

Hon. John Wilkinson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm not exactly sure whether the member is referring to me, but I would ask him to withdraw that.

Interjection: That's not a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That's fine; I'll settle this right now. That's not a point of order.

The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to correct the record: It was the former Minister of the Environment, who is now the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I'm sorry; I got his old title wrong. It was the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Mr. Gerretsen, the member from—

Mr. Michael Prue: Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Kingston and the Islands, who made that comment.

My point is, he admitted that in fact the minister holds the deck of cards and is able to decide what constitutes a land use plan and how a land use plan will work. My point is this: If you're trying to say that a land use plan in the Far North, in NAN territory, is the same kettle of fish as a plan in a municipality, well, then, there's our problem. There lies the problem: You don't understand the difference. And I think that was a huge admission in the heckling, because it said where the government's at. It tells me that the minister doesn't want to tell us what it is and tries to tell us something that it's not, or they perfectly well understand, or they don't understand at all and should go back to the drawing board.

The other thing, and I touched on it very quickly in the debate, is that the money that's being put forward in order to develop the land use plans—we'll never have the amount of money.

I've got three minutes, and this is the kicker. Let's say a community decides they want a land use plan. So they draft it under section 12, I believe it is, and all of a sudden they now have a land use plan that's in place. Let's say that the community, in drafting that land use plan, says, "I want to protect this particular part of my territory for future generations because there are heritage sites there that we want to protect," or something that they want to protect as far as the natural environment. They protect it in the land use plan, and let's say that the minister accepts it and goes forward and does accept the final land use plan, and it becomes the official plan. Under subsection 13(4), the minister can do an exemption order. The minister is allowed to say, "Hold it a second. We've now found a mine under grandfather's tombstone"—I'm being a little bit dramatic, but you know what I'm getting at—"and we think that the socioeconomic benefits to Ontario are so important that we want to go ahead and develop that mine." First Nations would say, "No, no, no. You can't do it." The minister uses subsection 4 in section 13 of the act and says, "Here's a six-month notice. I'm going to go through a bit of a dog-and-pony show with you, but at the end of the six months, if you haven't agreed, I'm going to override your land use plan." No wonder First Nations are up in arms and don't want to accept Bill 191.

I make the offer again to the government: If you say you want a new relationship with First Nations, if you say that you want to give land use planning to First Nations to do what is right for them and what is right for the environment, if you truly mean all of these things, then you don't call this thing for a vote this evening for third reading. You start back at the beginning and go back to First Nations and do what should have been done

in the first place, and allow First Nations to work with you to develop what could have been a very good product. In the end, we could have all been winners in this process.

I want to make clear that First Nations—and this is not me saying this; First Nations have been saying this. They will not allow development on their land if you allow Bill 191 as it stands. They're going to do what they have to do in order to protect their interests. Whatever happens now is going to be squarely in the lap of Dalton McGuinty, the Premier of this province. He holds the sole responsibility for whatever happens, because he has been forewarned by First Nations, by municipalities across northern Ontario, by chambers of commerce, by the prospectors and developers' association and by the mining industry of this province that this bill is flawed, does not work, doesn't get us to where we want to go. If First Nations—and I know they'll have to protect their interests—end up having to do civil disobedience, it will fall squarely in the lap of this government, which will rue the day that it passed this act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you to all members for this afternoon's debate. Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 2, 2010, I am now required to put the question.

Mrs. Jeffrey has moved third reading of Bill 191, An Act with respect to land use planning and protection in the Far North. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I have received a document signed by the chief government whip:

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on Bill 191, An Act with respect to land use planning and protection in the Far North, be deferred until deferred votes. That will occur Thursday morning after question period."

Third reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

1800

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

MANUFACTURING JOBS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Leeds–Grenville has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade last Thursday on the closure of Abbott Laboratories in Brockville. The member has five minutes for his presentation, and the minister or

parliamentary assistant may respond for up to five minutes.

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: Absolutely. Thank you, Minister.

I just want to take this opportunity to talk about my dissatisfaction with the answer that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade gave me last week. My question was a call to action. It was a plea to get the government opposite mobilized to help save 157 good-paying manufacturing jobs at the Abbott Laboratories site in Brockville.

But that wasn't the answer that I heard from the minister. I asked for a commitment to work with me and those in my riding, but instead I got a lecture from the minister for daring to question this government's economic policies.

I have to ask again, as I did in my question: If the government's policies were so wonderful, why are Ontarians, and now Brockvillians, seeing jobs vanish at a time when we should be in recovery?

As members know, it was just over a week ago, on September 14, that the municipality of Brockville, in my riding of Leeds–Grenville, learned about the devastating news that one of the most venerable plants in the city, Abbott Laboratories, was going to close. I have to tell you, that announcement has sent shock waves through that community, a community that's already reeling from a string of plant closures and layoffs as a result of this government. This latest blow to our economy in Leeds–Grenville will see those 157 jobs leave when that plant closes its doors in the fall of 2012.

I know that saving jobs has become a top priority in that community. People know it's critical to maintain that manufacturing presence, to maintain those jobs and to help foster future economic growth in the city. The question that I have to ask today is, does the government opposite understand what's at stake in that community?

My office has been reaching out to the local, the Canadian Auto Workers. We've been talking to the city's economic development plant. As well, I've had conversations with Leeds–Grenville MP Gordon Brown and my predecessor, Bob Runciman, who's the senator for the Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes region. We've done so with the intention of using that two-year window, before the plant is shut down, as an opportunity for us to save jobs. We're not prepared to give up without a fight.

My question that day to the minister was that I needed her and her government to be onside with our effort. I'm calling on the parliamentary assistant, as I did to the minister last week, to join us, to work with all levels of government and the community. I'm asking again to find out what steps the government is prepared to take to work with Abbott officials to maintain that business in Brockville.

Last week my response to the minister's question—she mentioned that she had been in regular contact with the company and that she was “surprised that we were not aware that this may come....” She also stated that her staff were trying to reach out to company officials on the

phone in the wake of the shutdown announcements and that they came as a surprise to her. I know my constituents in Brockville would be interested to hear exactly what the ministry staff have done since then. If they had apparently good relationships with the company, I'd like to hear how those relationships went.

As everyone knows, last week the primary reason given for that plant to close was that they produce adult and infant nutritional formulas and they need to retool the plant to make them available in resealable plastic containers.

We need the ministry to step up. I know that there are funds, like the eastern Ontario development fund—and surely to goodness, we can't use a program like that to help retain that plant.

We're asking the government to roll up their sleeves and join us to be part of our efforts to keep that plant in Brockville. We want you to help formulate the plan with our local community before the lights are out.

I have to say that the parliamentary assistant, I take it, will be responding, obviously, on behalf of the minister. I have the greatest respect for Mr. Kwinter, the member for York Centre. I know that when I was elected mayor of Brockville many, many years ago—I was mayor in 1985, when he was first elected. I know him to be a man of great character. He was a minister who listened, and I'm sure we're very excited about his response on behalf of the government. Plus, he also has a BA in fine arts like I do, so I have the greatest respect for you. I look forward to your response.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for York Centre and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I am delighted to respond. First and foremost, we are concerned about the employees. No one likes to see a plant close down. This is an interesting situation in that everybody was caught by surprise. They had invested, I guess it was in 2007—they added warehouse space, so obviously they thought their business was going forward. In 2010, they increased their water disposal capability, so they thought it was going forward.

This decision, obviously, was not made locally; it was made in Chicago, where the head office is. The reason they gave was because they felt that the market had changed on them and the plant that they had was not equipped to provide the kind of product that the consumer was demanding. That was unfortunate. We are trying to do what we can to see if we can, in fact, work something out with that company.

The bad news is, it's closing in 2012 in the third quarter. The good news is, we have some time. This is something that the ministry is working on, and it's something that, without giving any kind of promises—because we don't control it; this is a decision that's made at the head office, and we have to do what we can to try to get them to change that decision.

Representatives from both the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities have reached out to the com-

pany and the region. We will continue to work these avenues to ease this transition for the workers who are losing their jobs if, in fact, we can't reverse the decision. More specifically, representatives from both of these ministries have contacted the Abbott office in Brockville and the Chicago head office, and both ministries have also been in touch with the Brockville Economic Development Office to see where and how we can be of further service to the laid-off workers.

Ontario is emerging from one of the worst economic downturns of our lifetime, and while there are signs of improvement, we know that we aren't out of the woods just yet. That's why job creation and economic growth remains a priority for this government for all sectors in Ontario.

In terms of the life sciences specifically, we have committed to investing \$161 million into this sector, and we are moving quickly to deploy this support. We invested over \$21 million in the health technology exchange to help develop cutting-edge medical and assistive technologies that can be marketed to the world. This investment is expected to help create more than 130 new jobs and retain additional high tech jobs. Through the Ontario Research Fund, the province committed \$115 million to genomics and gene-related research through the global leadership round in genomics and life sciences. This one-time round of funding is supporting 19 large-scale collaborative projects that aim to discover new therapies and technologies that are improving quality of life as well as protecting our environment and biodiversity.

On August 26, we launched the \$7-million fund to support Ontario biotechnology companies that focus on

early-stage product development. We acted quickly to make funds available to this highly innovative, cash-starved sector. Ontario biotechnology companies that apply for funding may be eligible to receive up to \$1 million in support through this program. We've set aside \$17 million and are currently working with stakeholders to develop a province-wide coordinating infrastructure to streamline administrative process and research and do an ethics review. This will bring more clinical trial investments to Ontario.

This government is also committed to the economic development of eastern Ontario. The eastern Ontario development fund provides grants to businesses, municipalities and not-for-profit associations to support economic development initiatives like capital investment, worker training and investment attraction. To date, the fund has committed over \$24.6 million to 53 announced projects, representing a total project investment of over \$171 million, with 745 new jobs to be created.

In Brockville specifically, the results are impressive. On March 18, 2010, Ontario provided \$1.5 million to Northern Cables Inc. in Brockville to create 20 new full-time jobs. The funding will enable the company to expand its Brockville building space and expand its industrial product line. On January 12, 2010, Ontario provided \$839,835 to Burnbrae Farms Ltd. in the Brockville and Lyn facilities to create 20 new jobs—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock on Thursday morning, September 23.

The House adjourned at 1811.

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Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 23 September 2010

Jeudi 23 septembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 23 September 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 23 septembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Hindu prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WATER OPPORTUNITIES AND WATER CONSERVATION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DES TECHNOLOGIES DE L'EAU ET LA CONSERVATION DE L'EAU

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 14, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 72, An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts in respect of water conservation and other matters / Projet de loi 72, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur le développement des technologies de l'eau et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'eau et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: This is the first opportunity since the summer break that I've had to rise in the Legislature and debate anything; I'm pleased that it is the Water Opportunities Act.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Let the whip know you need more time. I want to hear you.

Mr. Peter Shurman: You want to hear me?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yeah.

Mr. Peter Shurman: You'll get a chance.

This is the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, Bill 72, that we're talking about today. The first thing that came into my mind this morning, as I thought about debating this bill, is that the middle word of Water Opportunities Act is "opportunities." Opportunities, in the context of the government of the day, is code for "taxation." It's an opportunity to tax.

It's a good day to be looking at this act. As I thought about what I would say this morning, I took a look at a government website called the Environmental Registry and the description of the act. The first paragraph says that Bill 72 was introduced, received first reading, back in the spring, in May, and, if passed—which I always find strange: if passed? Do the math: There are 70 of them, 25 of us and 12 NDP; I think it'll pass—by the

Legislature, "the act would establish a framework to drive innovation, create economic opportunities, sustain water infrastructure and conserve Ontario's water. It would lay the foundation for new Ontario jobs and make our province a North American leader in the development and sale of new technologies and services for water conservation and treatment."

I read that this morning and I thought, "Boy, if I were a member of the public and reading that for the first time, I would say to myself, 'Aspirations, indeed. What a terrific idea.'" But then I might pick up a newspaper that doesn't ordinarily get delivered to the Shurman home, the Toronto Star, and I might read a story that appears this morning that begins like this:

"Great Lakes pollution is getting worse because sewage systems are outdated and Ontario's north is turning into a Wild West for miners and forestry companies, warns Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller.

"His annual report slams Premier Dalton McGuinty's government for talking a good game on the environment but not following through, putting at risk everything from drinking water to air quality and wildlife."

It goes on to say, "It's been 27 years since the province tightened cleanliness standards for sewage treatment plants emptying waste water into the Great Lakes—a major problem because of the fast-growing population in southern Ontario.

"We have the technology to treat the sewage to very low concentrations," Miller said, noting the Americans have done a better job through their Clean Water Act and have cleaner beaches and shorelines than Ontario."

It strikes me that it's the Americans that have the economic problems that dwarf ours these days, and we're looking at Bill 72, the Water Opportunities Act. I think I'm beginning to sound like a broken record speaking to these bills. This bill is not particularly different than any other bill that comes under the general heading of environment that has been introduced by this government. The bill states some principles, some aspirations—they sound pretty good. The government spins what they say the bill will do, but without that detail in the bill, no one can honestly say what the bill will or will not do. So the conclusion that people on this side and, for that matter, members of the public, have to draw is that this government, after seven years of its watch, has not only sold Ontario down the river but is now ready to sell the river. That's the Water Opportunities Act, Bill 72.

So all we can do is go on precedents; all we can do is go on experience. As economic development critic for the Progressive Conservative Party of Tim Hudak, I must

say that the portion of the bill that most interests me is the creation of a corporation called Water Technology Acceleration Project, or TAP. Boy, does this government love acronyms—TAP. The objects of the corporation, as stated in the bill, should give Ontarians great pause. The first object is to promote the development of Ontario's water and waste water sectors. Boy, that Star article this morning that comes from the report issued by Environment Commissioner Miller yesterday does say it all.

0910

The Liberals have said this does not mean selling Ontario's water resources or increasing water-taking permits, but what concerns us is that they haven't said what it does mean. If Ontarians want to know what this bill is really all about—let's be clear: This is the Green Energy Act for water. I want to call the attention of particularly those of us who are concerned about the environment—I would hope it's everybody—and those watching on television, with particular reference to your concerns about the environment. This government, the government of the day, would like you to believe that if you didn't support the Green Energy Act, then you don't care about the environment because you don't care about green energy. The quick jump from that is, if you don't support this act, then you don't care about clean water. Those conclusions would be patently untrue.

These acts are being passed with a view to what? This Legislature probably has—I haven't done the count—less than 90 sitting days left before it dissolves sometime in the early spring and we move into election mode. So this legislation and anything else that's presented are really meant as feathers for the nest to present a platform on the part of the Liberals who seek re-election on October 6, 2011, and who I can say are going to have a heck of a time doing it. In any event—I digress—the bill has not stated what it truly means. Fresh water is described by some as the oil of the future. There is no doubt that the lakes and streams and the adjacency to the Great Lakes makes Ontario an interesting place if the goal is fresh water. With the abundance of fresh water in Ontario, the rest of the world looks to us for leadership.

If the rest of the world comes knocking on Ontario's door looking to pay basically a king's ransom for Ontario's water, what do you think the McGuinty Liberals would do? Again, we have to look at the past in order to get an indicator for the future. Let's look at the recent past and let's look at a deal that was made in aid of promoting renewable energy in the province of Ontario. The Samsung deal has shown Ontarians that the McGuinty Liberals will sell out this province and its people at the drop of a hat: "We need wind energy. If you don't support the Green Energy Act, you won't get wind energy; there's no other way to do it. Let's take seven billion of your tax dollars, send them to Korea and get a company that makes fantastic cellphones, marvellous computer screens, and they'll come in and build us a wind technology infrastructure the likes of which you've never seen." And they'd be right about "the likes of which you've never seen," because at the point that

Samsung was announced as part of our wind technology plan—their wind technology plan—Samsung had one wind turbine operating in California on a test basis because, although it may be a great big company, it hadn't entered the wind area at all. This is the group—not Samsung particularly, but the Ontario government under Dalton McGuinty—that would take and clean up our water.

The irony is that a king's ransom is not being paid by some foreign multinational; it's being paid by the taxpayers of this province. Jobs get exported to a foreign country. So let's export the jobs and let's export the water.

Ontarians pay the price many times over: the loss of good-paying jobs in Ontario to a foreign national. Look over the course of the last year—just the last year; forget about the entire three years of this term and the four years before that, that the McGuinty Liberals have been in charge. We have been told over the course of the past year under the aegis of the budget, under the aegis of the Green Energy Act and certainly, most recently, under the aegis of the harmonized sales tax, that there would be a million new jobs created in the province of Ontario over the course of the near to medium term. We don't see jobs being created. We see employment figures published on a month-by-month basis—my office particularly tracks them—and we have a huge net loss and continuing accumulated losses on a month-by-month basis. At the same time, as we saw the other day, we have a couple of consecutive months now, since the HST was introduced, where the consumer price index in the province of Ontario outstrips by quite a substantial margin all other provinces—in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Jeff Leal: You're wrong.

Mr. Peter Shurman: You can protest all you want; the figures speak for themselves. It's not me saying this; it's Statistics Canada.

And let's not leave it to that alone; let's look at our energy bills. Anybody who has opened their electricity bill over the course of the past couple of months knows that there are four new line items that they have to contend with. My constituents report increases at or in excess of 50% at this point, over what they used to pay. If these are the tenets that we have to refer to in terms of the past so that we can try to discern what the future might look like, we're in serious trouble.

This is more than just passing commentary; this is devastating. It's devastating on two particular ends of the demographic spectrum, which causes me and should cause anyone sitting in this chamber great concern: It's devastating for young families, because young families are the people who struggle to make the mortgage payment every month because they want to make sure that the family home, the primary and most significant asset in most people's lives, is protected; and it's devastating for seniors on fixed incomes who have already had to sustain major hits over the course of the past couple of years because the recession has hit them. They may not have what they used to have in what is commonly known

by the term “nest egg,” and they get hit with what? Incredibly accelerated hydro bills, with a prediction from independent studies that these will rise at approximately 7% a year over the course of the next five years. They get hit with a harmonized sales tax—and now estimates that whatever this water bill is going to do, it's going to cost you more.

One of the things that it purports to do is mandate municipalities to fix aging infrastructure. This is something that should have been done a long, long time ago and on an ongoing basis. Twenty-five per cent of the water that is distributed in our municipalities is the estimate for spillage in the infrastructure we've got now. So 100% of the water that goes into the system results in 75% getting to you and 25% going into the ground—witness the sinkholes that occasionally appear in various places in our province, not least in the area of Toronto, when pipes that are too old burst. The McGuinty government would tell you, “Well, that's why we introduced the bill. Part of it addresses the whole infrastructure question.” Guess who's going to pay? You are, taxpayers: You're going to pay. And the instantaneous response might be, “Well, that's who should pay. Taxes pay for replacement of infrastructure.” Of course they do. But the tax burden on Ontarians at this point is just too much to bear. We can't pay any more. And that comes down to how you use the money that you've got. It comes down to the McGuinty government saying, “This is our money. We'll distribute it any way we want. It's our set of priorities, at least for the course of this four years, so we're going to set those priorities, and we'll cover infrastructure; we'll cover anything we'd like to do.” That's how we resulted in a \$20-billion deficit last year, this year and predicted somewhere in that territory for next year. Ontario families can no longer pay.

0920

As economic development critic, I'm pretty concerned about what soaring hydro rates will mean to keeping businesses in Ontario. I have to add to that soaring water rates, which are around the corner, because make no mistake: This bill will pass. This is the last day, I would estimate, of debate on this bill. It will be put to a vote, it will pass second reading, it will make it speedily to third reading and it will become law. Then we'll find out what it really wants to do.

The hallmark of Ontario's success economically has been the availability of an affordable, reliable energy supply. I use energy continually here as the example because energy and water are irrevocably locked together under the general heading of environment. That's why there's a statue erected to Adam Beck, the father of hydroelectricity in Ontario. Skyrocketing hydro costs are making Ontario less and less competitive, where businesses are concerned; it's already happening. What's going to be the situation when the costs are brought to bear to implement whatever this bill winds up being by the time the regulations are applied? What's going to happen to our competitive situation? And I won't say “edge” because I don't believe it to be an edge.

I can tell you, again with my economic development hat on, that I get visits from stakeholders who use water and who use energy in the province of Ontario. What I hear are allusions—and maybe I could use a stronger word than that—to the fact that we're getting to a tipping point. And I'm not talking about small businesses; I'm talking about significant industry and I'm talking about first-hand information that says, “You know, if you keep doing this to us, there are other jurisdictions in Canada, there are other jurisdictions in the United States where we can or even where we do have plants, where we can do the same things that we do in Ontario, where labour force is available, where energy is in abundant supply and where it is relatively cheap.”

Let's not forget that when the Green Energy Act was originally introduced, then-Minister Smitherman said that the bill would only raise energy rates by 1%—in this chamber a year and a half ago. It was déjà vu when the environment minister said that this bill was not about raising water rates, since those rates are set by municipalities. What are municipalities to do when there's a mandate coming from Action Central here at Queen's Park that says, “You will do this. You will do it now. Oh, and by the way, you raise the money, because we don't have it to give to you”? That's what we're talking about. People know that. People at this point, even at the general population level, know that when legislation like this comes out of this chamber, ultimately, it means my pocketbook—mine, as an Ontario taxpayer. Given the track record on the Green Energy Act and on hydro rates only one year in, Ontario families and businesses should really be bracing themselves for what this legislation is going to do to their water bills. It makes Ontario's business environment just that much less competitive. It will drive more businesses out of Ontario to cheaper jurisdictions.

The second objective of this new corporation that will be created is to assist in the commercialization of clean water technologies. That begs a number of questions, questions like: Why does government need a bill to do this? Why can't it just be done? Why does government need a new corporation to do this—a new corporation, which means what? More overhead, more staff—an already-bloated bureaucracy that will become that much more bloated as a result.

With a \$20-billion deficit, why does this government keep looking for ways to spend money that, let's face it, it really doesn't have? In what alternate universe can this type of expenditure be a priority when emergency rooms are closing and hospital services are being cut, when nurses are being fired and when children with serious mental health issues are languishing on waiting lists?

This is the way I'd like to end this presentation. This is about the word that this party has been talking about for a period of years now, when it comes to the McGuinty government. It's about priorities. It's about what you say you're going to spend the pool of money that you have on; it's not about what you're going to do going forward with a pool of money that is not available to you but you're going to spend anyway. So prioritization dictates

what you do, and prioritization is not in the lexicon of the government of Ontario of the day. For that reason, I will not be voting for Bill 72.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to echo some of the comments that were made by my good friend—I'm sorry; I don't know the riding, Mr. Shurman.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thornhill.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thornhill. I know we can't give the names, but it takes me a long time, after 20 years, to know the ridings in this place.

I just want to say that he's right when he touches on the issue that folks back home are really feeling the pinch, and that is the point that Andrea Horwath and New Democrats have been raising day in and day out. If you don't get whacked on the HST when you buy fuel for your truck, if you don't get whacked by a smart meter when you get your hydro bill, if you don't get whacked by a new water tax that will be coming your way soon—I don't know what's happening, but at the end of the day people are really feeling the pinch of this government's intrusion into their pockets.

I think people are saying, "Listen, we understand that governments have a responsibility to do a number of things," including ensuring that we have safe drinking water and that we have an infrastructure that works, such as a health infrastructure, a social infrastructure and hard infrastructure, but how much can the individual family, how much can the individual person take when it comes to the pressure that that puts on one's pocketbook?

I can tell you, in my constituency offices across my riding, from Timmins to Peawanuk, it's much the same. People have been receiving their hydro bills. They are beside themselves at the point to which these bills have gone up—to extraordinary amounts; over 100%, in a lot of cases. They look at the smart meters in our area that are now going to start applying the differential rate during the day. Supposedly we're going to have to do our washing and our cooking some time at 2 o'clock in the morning when everybody else is sleeping.

People are saying, "Listen, enough is enough. When is somebody going to speak up for me? When is somebody going to say, 'Listen, you need a break and we're there to do it for you?'" Certainly, this Liberal government has not been doing that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to respond to the member for Thornhill on the Water Opportunities Act, 2010. Already this program has projects moving forward in small municipalities under 5,000 people. That was announced at the municipalities meeting in August. They're looking for sustainability in these small systems, which are very difficult to run efficiently, and conservation of water. They're looking at what their pumping costs are, what the costs of the leakage from the systems are. Sustainability, of course, is very important. There are \$75 million going to those small projects in municipalities

under 5,000. They're trying to get some of them together that are very small. These are issues that are very important. They cost a lot of money when there is a breakdown.

A party that has brought Walkerton to us should not lecture this government on what we've done. I spent 35 years as a consulting engineer in this province, often associated with water and water services. It's about looking at the energy costs, at the efficiencies, at conservation of water. We pump 30% or 40% of the water and it's lost in our pipe systems; it does not arrive at the tap.

We must be looking at these systems in a different way than we have in the past of just pumping more water through leaky pipes. The challenges for the taxpayer dollars are many, of course, and we have a lot to learn about the conservation of water and better use of this finite natural resource.

We arrived at this situation after 100 years of development, and there was a lot of pollution of our air and water. Replacing infrastructure is not easy, but this government has done a lot. We have not only been talking, we've been doing, and we will continue to replace—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

0930

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate my colleague the member for Thornhill, who is also our economic critic and does an outstanding job, for the presentation he made this morning on Bill 72, an act to enact the water opportunities act in respect of water conservation and other matters. I think he made some excellent points. Some of them that I would like to reiterate: the fact that a bill of this nature obviously sounds great on paper, just like your Green Energy Act did and maybe other acts did, but the reality is that there's going to be a tremendous cost, not only for families but also for businesses, large and small. This bill, like the Green Energy Act and also like the HST, is going to make this province much less competitive.

This takes me back to 1995, when our government assumed power. This province had become totally, totally uncompetitive in the global economy. We were losing jobs, and there was simply a barrier around the province. You are constructing that same barrier, because we've already seen the increase in energy costs. Whether you are a household or a business, we know that some of the prices have gone up 50%. It's simply unaffordable. Your act has created this situation. When we take a look at energy, we need to always keep in mind, "Let's do what's affordable and let's do what obviously creates a reliable supply of energy." You're simply not doing that.

So we look at this bill. Again, you pretend you're doing what's in the best interests of the residents in this province, and you just are not, because you are going to force municipalities to raise their taxes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Seeing none, the honourable member from Thornhill has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you to the members for Timmins–James Bay, Ottawa–Orléans and Kitchener–Waterloo for their comments with regard to my presentation. The first thing I would say, particularly to the member for Ottawa–Orléans, is that when it comes to lecturing, don't lecture me about Walkerton. Walkerton wasn't caused by any Progressive Conservative government; Walkerton was caused by somebody who had too much liquor and was responsible for controls. You know it and I know it, and I'm tired of hearing history lessons from a government on the other side that continues to enact legislation that turns our province into a wasteland, while Saskatchewan and British Columbia and Quebec overtake us, because you don't understand how to progressively legislate and how to put tax structures into place that attract business to our province. Instead, you tax the taxpayers and try to make it happen that way. The truth is that if you want—I'll read another newspaper to you, one that is not the Toronto Star. Here is the Toronto Sun this morning:

"Deteriorating water quality in the southern Great Lakes, the unchecked health and well-being of far northern caribou herds and slack rules for locating large natural gas plants were among concerns raised by Ontario Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller in his latest report." And it goes on, the point being that you people, the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty, have been on watch for the past seven years. Don't look historically at what happened. The legacy of the Harris government is one outstanding job of creating a million net new jobs in the private sector. You people have done nothing but lose jobs, and how you've done it is by making our province as uncompetitive as it could be and now doing it even more so by taking taxpayers, particularly Ontario families, and putting them behind the eight ball on a consistent basis by enacting legislation like this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I don't want to take a lot of time, but I just want to put on the record a couple of things that I think need to be part of this debate. That is, to the degree that municipalities are struggling in order to pay for water and sewer infrastructure, we all know that there have been changes to water regulations in this province—for good reason—as a result of what happened out of Walkerton. But the pendulum has really swung very hard on the protection side—which we all understand; nobody argues that there shouldn't be protection. But it has forced municipalities and it has forced private landowners to make fairly significant investments in their water systems and their sewage treatment systems in order to be able to meet these new regulations that are out there. All I can tell you is that there is hardly a community in my riding—and I would imagine it's the same in most other members' ridings across this province—that isn't struggling to figure out where they are going to get the money to pay for the work that needs to be done.

I look at the city of Timmins as an example, which has a \$60-million water project that they want to get moving

forward on. To the credit of both the federal and provincial governments, they've both put up the \$20 million. But where does the municipality come up with the \$20 million, where you're a municipality of 45,000 people and you have other infrastructure projects that are screaming for investment, everything from roads to fixing up the roofs on buildings etc.? It is very, very difficult for municipalities to come up with that money. On top of that, in the city of Timmins we're having to redo our sewage treatment plant, which is going to be a very expensive project in itself. The bottom line is, it's going to fall back on municipal ratepayers and it's going to fall back on provincial and federal taxes, which means to say that we're all going to pay for it through our pocketbooks yet again.

It goes back to the point that I made earlier, which Andrea Horwath, as the leader of the New Democratic Party, has been raising, and that is: People understand. People are a lot smarter than we sometimes give them credit for. They get it. There need to be good rules when it comes to water and sewer treatment, for good reason. They get it. There needs to be a good health infrastructure that yes, we understand, costs money. They know when they're sick or a family member is sick and they show up at the doctor's office or the hospital, they want the best of services for that person or for themselves, in the event that they need to turn to our health care system.

But there comes a point when you can't afford to pay any more. What we're starting to see—and I think you're seeing it in this municipal election with what's happening with the mayoralty candidates in the city of Toronto. I think we're going to see it in the next provincial election and probably the next federal election. Certainly, you're seeing it in the United States with this Tea Party phenomenon. I don't see it so much as a shift to the right. Some people would like to categorize it as, "Oh, it's because they're all coming back to the right wing and there are going to be right-wing zealots running the country yet again. We'll be so much better off." I don't think it's the case. The issue is that people are saying, "Yes, those things need to be done, but do they all have to be done now?" And more importantly, "Let's first of all make sure there's a capacity to pay before you start making decisions about spending this kind of money by changing the rules that force these types of investments to happen."

I can tell you, as a ratepayer in the city of Timmins—I own a home and I own a cottage in the city of Timmins. I pay twice to my municipality for two different properties. It's an expensive thing. And I understand. I've got to pay municipal taxes. I get it: I understand it costs money for the municipality to run the services that connect to my home and that my children and our own family have used when it comes to going to get them. But there's only so much I can pay, and I make a pretty good buck. I make 130,000 bucks a year working here. If I'm starting to feel it, as a person who has upper-middle income—I would probably say higher middle-income—imagine how those folks at the lower end of the income scale are feeling.

There are many people in our society, in our communities across this province, who are working for far less money than we MPPs and others who are fortunate enough to make the kind of money that we do. They're working for \$14-an-hour jobs because the \$26- and \$30-an-hour jobs that used to exist in industry are no longer there. A lot of these people have gone into the service industry, where they're working for \$14, \$15, \$16 an hour. They're trying to maintain their homes, pay their mortgages, pay their hydro bills, pay their water bills, feed their families and put their kids through school. They're just feeling the pinch. Again, I say, if you see the Rob Ford phenomenon going on in the city of Toronto, I don't see it so much as a right-wing thing; I just see it as the voter and the taxpayer saying, "Hold it. I just can't take no more."

I was flying back to Timmins last Thursday, as I do travelling to and from my home to Queen's Park every week, and I was sitting next to a woman. I won't say what her name is because she didn't give me permission to use this conversation publicly, but it really struck me, because it exemplified what a whole bunch of people are going through. Here's a woman. She's 49 years old. She and her husband have three kids, one who's just entering college and two others who are in high school. He used to work for the Ministry of Natural Resources in the department that basically did the electronic stuff for the ministry—telephones, radios and telecommunications—that kind of stuff. The MNR, in their wisdom, decided to privatize that service, so he was shifted to the private sector, with the successful bidder who got the contract, to do that work.

Within a year of being shifted out to that private contractor, he became ill. He has a heart condition. He's not able to work because they're not able to operate on him for some very complex reasons, and he's not able to exert himself because he'll have another heart attack. No benefits with the employer. That's the new reality. That's the new job people are going to. People are being hired by people who pay them far less than they used to make in the old, traditional jobs in industry and government. They're working at jobs that have little or no benefits. In this case, this guy has no benefits when it comes to a sick plan or long-term disability, other than what the employment insurance system provides him. So they have lost the income, he is out of EI and his wife is the only one who works.

0940

Now, she is a bookkeeper who used to work for a company that has since gone under because of what has happened in this recession. Why do I meet her on a plane? Because she's flying back from Fort McMurray. She flies to Fort McMurray on a three-week rotation, where she works 12 hours a day for \$14 an hour, and then—luckily her employer pays for her flight—she comes back to Timmins for a week that she can spend with her family. She said to me on the plane—and I think this is worth repeating—"You know, I'm 49 years old. My husband is 51. We have three kids. We thought,

when we set out, that at this point in our lives, life would be a little bit easier. And do you know what? It's gotten harder."

We continued the conversation and she said, "Do you know what I've got to do this week? We're really excited. Our oldest daughter has gone to college, and she's been accepted in a nursing program in the city of Timmins. We can't afford the cost of tuition"—she's not able to get the kind of OSAP support you would normally get because the income she has doesn't allow her to get the full amount—"so we're having to remortgage our house. We thought that at this point in our lives we'd be looking at staring down the last four or five years of mortgage payments so that we could be in a position to start thinking about our retirement." She said, "I don't know. I'm 49 years old and I feel like I'm 21 starting all over again."

So I just say to this government: I understand why the government is excited about announcing new programs that are going to do these great and wonderful things, but this woman I sat next to on the plane the other day is not very impressed. She just says, "Listen, I just want to know that it's going to get better, and I feel that it's getting worse. The only thing I know, when I open my hydro bill, when I go to get gas at the gas station, when I buy food at the grocery store, is that I get my paycheque and I make less money than I did before and I pay more out of my pocket now. I want life to get easier."

I think that is what Andrea Horwath and New Democrats have been trying to tell you for this last little while. The Liberal government is not an evil bunch of people sitting there trying to do dastardly things that maybe the right wing would like to portray you as. But I think we need to live within our means. We need to be able to say that, yes, these are important things to do and, yes, they need to be done, but maybe we don't do them all at the same time, maybe we don't do them all today, maybe we do them in a staggered way, when we're better able to afford to do them.

So I say to the government that this is an interesting bill. I'm not going to vote against this bill, because I think it's interesting enough to send to committee. But I'll be interested to see what the public has to say once it goes to committee, because the difficulty in the end is, can the taxpayer afford to pay more at a time when we're feeling that we're falling behind?

So on behalf of New Democrats and the leader of the Ontario New Democrats, Andrea Horwath, I just put out a plea: Let's make things easier for folks, for a change, so they can dream that tomorrow is going to be a better day and we don't have to continue on the downward spiral that we're all feeling in our family incomes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm certainly pleased to rise and comment on the remarks made by my colleague from Timmins—James Bay. Certainly, on our side of the House, we are extremely sensitive to many of the issues that the member described. We know that many people in

our society are truly hurting. The type of economic conditions we faced—a very difficult, deep recession—are ones that our government has taken extremely seriously. Of course, we have put in place measures that economists have recommended, in terms of stimulus funding and so on. But we know that people are being very frugal—the case that was described clearly illustrates that—and we want to remind people with this bill that they in fact have an opportunity to be frugal with their water.

Just to remind the member, the average person here in Ontario uses some 267 litres of water per day. If we compare that with the average in countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and France, people use only some 150 litres per day. There are opportunities for people to move towards what is clearly possible with water-efficient fixtures. Part of the bill relates to changes in the building code. We're looking at, certainly, new homes having toilets that flush only 4.8 litres compared to the current six litres. There will be labelling on products so that people can make a choice as to what is the most efficient system they can use.

There are many issues related to this bill. I feel this is a good step forward. It will allow individuals to save water, and that's a good thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Shurman: It was very interesting listening to the presentation by my friend from Timmins–James Bay, who amplified on a theme that I raised and I think that everybody on this side of the House is raising. People who watch us at home draw the automatic conclusion that because my friend from Timmins–James Bay is from the New Democratic Party and I'm from the Progressive Conservative Party, we couldn't possibly agree on anything. Nothing could be further from the truth. We may come from different segments when it comes to how you fund things and how you disburse funds, but we come from the very same place when it comes to the issue of how individual Ontario families deal with the exigencies of running those families.

He talks about encounters that he has had with people—he mentioned somebody on an airplane. I have encounters too, and I don't represent a riding as rural or as vast as my friend. I represent a riding that we can get to from this place by driving in a car for 20 minutes—Thornhill. Thornhill is known as one of the richest ridings in the province. It has an average household income in excess of \$100,000, so we're talking about people—sure there are poor people in Thornhill as well—but an average household income in excess of \$100,000.

When I took office in 2007, some people talked to me about making ends meet. Now, three scant years later, many, many people talk to me about making ends meet. They talk to me a lot about what happens when they open their hydro bills. They talk to me a lot about six cents, five cents plus HST for garbage bags. They talk to me a lot about what this water bill may mean ultimately, because we calculate that the number that will be attached

to what they pay for water now through their water taxes and through their municipal taxes could be in the \$700 to \$800 additional range. People cannot afford any more. That's the message that this government has to take, and it's the one we'll discuss next year.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I also want to add my comments to those of the member for Timmins–James Bay. I think all of us recognize how sensitive water is. The whole issue of what happened with Walkerton, when we hear about “boil water”—we know that we have a very fragile resource here that can be contaminated and can become almost dangerous very quickly. We need to make sure that we protect that in every way possible.

For most of us, as Canadians, because we see it around us so much, as we drive along—my husband and I did a road trip. We went into northern Ontario. You see nothing but pristine lakes there, and you think, “How can we talk about such a vast resource being in such danger?” Yet we know from our experience with Walkerton that it is in danger and that it's very possible, and we do need to do everything we can to protect it.

The member from Timmins–James Bay talked about municipalities and the cost that municipalities are experiencing. I remember, as a municipal councillor in a very small township, the kinds of things that had to happen, the kinds of discussions we had at the council table and the reluctance that some of the members and the councillors had in terms of making the proper, adequate and right decisions around increasing property taxes. We avoided doing those kinds of things because we were afraid to raise property taxes. There's a consequence that comes with that. That means that, after a while, you're behind; you're not taking care of the infrastructure the way you should. Then, all of a sudden, you're faced with a dilemma where you have to do something about the sewers, you have to do something about water, and suddenly you're putting this on to the tax base and it comes on in a big chunk. So, in some respects, we need to be responsible and take responsibility as councillors—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

0950

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to add a few comments to the Water Opportunities Act discussion that we're having this morning, just to add to some of the excellent comments already made by my colleagues the members from Thornhill and Kitchener–Waterloo.

I would like to say, to start, that this is just another piece of legislation that this government is famous for introducing: something that sounds good, something that sounds green. How could you possibly not be in favour of clean water? Well, of course we're in favour of clean water. We're in favour of developing clean water technology. But, right now, in the economic climate that we're dealing with right now, how can we possibly say yes to something—another government agency, another bureaucracy—where a cost has not yet been established?

We don't know what this is ultimately going to cost the taxpayers of Ontario, and I think if we're doing our jobs as responsible members of this Legislature, we need to have that information.

We've heard the perspective from the member from Timmins-James Bay, who has a vast northern riding, and we've heard the perspective from the member for Thornhill, who has a more urban riding. I represent a suburban riding, Whitby-Oshawa, and I can tell you that that is a place where most of our population commutes into the city every day. We have vast problems with transit, with infrastructure, with getting services coming to our neck of the woods, with the 407 being extended. These are all priorities that make a big difference to people in their day-to-day lives, but we're not dealing with that here. We're dealing with an idea of some wonderful green energy that sounds really good and that we can talk about up here while we're not dealing with the problems that make a difference in people's day-to-day lives.

So I urge this government: Let's start talking about it; let's start talking about the 407, how we get it extended to 35/115. Live up to the obligations that you've already set for yourselves. Once we finish with those, let's talk about something else, but let's do what we really need to do to get this province moving again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Timmins-James Bay has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank all the members for responding to what I had to say. In closing, I just want to say that people are finding it tougher and tougher, and what this bill is going to do in the end is create some sort of an organization that's going to figure out how we can ration water so we don't use as much. But the buzzword, at the end of the day, is that they're going to pass the bill on to the consumer.

So all Andrea Horwath and I are saying as New Democrats is, people have just had it. There's just so much ability to pay, and they're saying, "Listen, make sure that, first of all, you manage what you have now." We're in a recession. People understand that when their family incomes go down, they have to make some hard choices in their budgets, and the provincial government has to do the same. Maybe some of the things that you're trying to do which are good ideas—I wouldn't argue that this is not a good idea. It really needs to be well thought through and making sure that number one, if it's done, it's not going to cost more for the end user, and number two, if it is going to cost more for the end user, that we maybe put it on hold for a while until people can afford to pay.

This is not the first initiative of this type that this government has done. You put the smart meters on. Why? You said, "Because we want to conserve energy." Conserve, my eye. It's not about conserving energy; it's about socking people with a higher hydro bill, and people can't afford to pay. We have seen it with Stewardship Ontario, where the government said, "Oh, well, you know, we're going to make sure that we're able to have a

system that deals with making sure that we invest in recycling, reusing and repackaging etc. so that we lessen the impact on the environment." What ended up happening? It was a fiasco this summer, and it continues to be a fiasco. People are fed up, and are saying, "I work harder, I make less money, but the costs are going up," and this Liberal government has to understand that they're going in the wrong direction when it comes to passing all these costs on to the consumer. I'm with Andrea Horwath. This has got to stop.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing none, orders of the day.

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Wilkinson, moved second reading of Bill 72, An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard some noes.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

This vote will be deferred until after question period today, during deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Phillips has indicated "no further business."

This House stands recessed until 10:30, at which time we'll have question period, hopefully.

The House recessed from 0955 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to welcome to the east gallery my constituents Mr. Peter Hughes and his wife, Melodie Hughes. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to welcome today Harold Wilson, who is with the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, who will be awaiting with anticipation the vote on Bill 191.

Mr. Jim Brownell: In the public gallery, I'd like to welcome the Knights Templar delegates from around the world who are in Canada for the international convent and investiture. It is the Priory of St. James, Knights Templar of Jerusalem, hosting for the first time in Canada this convent and investiture. Welcome to Ontario and welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: This morning I'm pleased to welcome in the west gallery Len Rempel from New Hamburg in the township of Wilmot, from the riding of Kitchener-Conestoga. Len is the father of Emily Rempel, one of our pages. Welcome this morning, Len.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am very pleased to welcome members of the Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario, better known as POGO, with us here: Dr. Corin Greenberg, Dr. Mark Greenberg, Ian Kennedy, Madeline Riehl, Susan Portner, Barbara Dyce, Vanessa Yakobson,

Jacqui DeBique and Bruna DiMonte. I know all members are very happy to have POGO joining us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to thank, in the Speaker's gallery today, Gloria Richards, the Speaker's apartment coordinator, for her 40 years of service to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, to the members and to all the Speakers she has assisted. Thank you, Gloria.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): See, we all love you, Gloria.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Seeing no further introductions, it's time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is for the Premier. Premier, you have turned the Ontario Power Authority, the OPA, into the eHealth of the Ontario energy sector. While Ontario families get stuck with the bills, the Ontario Power Authority has ballooned from some 15 to 300 bureaucrats, and they can't get the basic job done. They've not produced the long-term energy plan yet, despite five years on the job, but they seem to be more than happy to be the propaganda arm for your expensive energy experiments.

Premier, why is it that after five years, the OPA has yet to show itself up to the job but excels at expensive ad campaigns and spin for the McGuinty Liberals?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just can't share my honourable colleague's negativity when it comes to the electricity circumstances in the province of Ontario. I think the people at the OPA have done quite a good job of helping to develop a long-term plan.

Again, my honourable colleague knows that in fact there is a long-term plan on the books. It's 20 years long, and it requires that every three years, we revise that plan in keeping with the then projected outlook.

The good news in Ontario is that we in fact have a long-term plan. They did not have one. We're investing heavily in new transmission and in new generation. There are costs associated with that. We understand that those costs have consequences for our families. There are a number of things that we have done with our families. We will continue to look for ways where we can work together with families to help them manage their electricity bills as they go up. But our single most

important responsibility is to make sure the lights come on in the province of Ontario, and we will continue to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, let me give you some facts: The OPA bureaucracy has grown by 464%. The number of six-figure salaries across your government, as a whole, has gone up 134%—shocking enough, but at the OPA, Premier, a 1,300% increase in bureaucrats making more than \$100,000 a year. Despite the fact that the OPA has ballooned like this, you've spent some \$80 million in contracts and consultants beyond that, but they still have yet to produce the Premier's much-anticipated, forever-delayed energy plan.

Premier, why are families, who are stuck struggling with the bills, paying for your expensive energy experiments? What are they getting in return for the \$732-a-year more they are paying because of your poor—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague of the mess that he helped create when they were in government. One of the things that they did was they left to our children and grandchildren \$19.4 billion in stranded hydro debt. Paying off that debt is a significant component of every Ontario hydro bill. Every single month, when Ontario families pay their bills, they have to pay something connected with the hydro debt. More than that, when they recklessly froze prices in the province of Ontario and passed that on to taxpayers, that cost Ontarians \$900 million.

We're not going there. We're acting responsibly, building new generation, keeping the lights on and working with families to keep their costs down.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let's see, here, if we can pierce the Premier's bubble and keep him abreast of what's happening in the real world today. Ontario families are getting stuck with higher and higher hydro bills because of your out-of-control energy experiments. You have turned the Ontario Power Authority into the eHealth of the energy sector. Both have runaway spending, both have become a feeding frenzy for Liberal-friendly consultants, and the OPA is stacked with Liberal hacks and flacks. Just like with eHealth, friends of the McGuinty government are getting rich off the OPA while ordinary, hard-working families and seniors are getting stuck with the bill.

Premier, why didn't you learn your lesson? How did you let the rot of eHealth creep into the energy sector with your eHealth-style Ontario Power Authority?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: So far today, my honourable colleague has not advanced anything which has a foundation in fact.

When we talk about some things that are going up, I think it's important to understand that coal generation went up 127% on their watch. Carbon dioxide emissions went up 124% on their watch.

We have in place a plan to create 50,000 clean, green energy jobs. The first Ontario plant for Canadian Solar is in Guelph. It's creating 500 new high-tech jobs in Guelph. Heliene Canada will be opening a plant in Sault Ste. Marie shortly; they will be opening a solar module manufacturing plant. The Siemens company recently announced they're going to be building wind turbine plants as part of our Samsung deal; that's 900 new jobs.

I ask my honourable colleague: Why is he standing against electricity reform in the province? Why won't he join us and create those—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier and back to the real world: Premier, you know that your expensive energy experiments and your runaway taxes and red tape have chased some 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs out of our province, and you're not done yet. Every day, members of the Ontario PC caucus hear from hard-working families, we hear from seniors, we hear from people with disabilities who cannot afford your expensive energy experiments any longer. They're afraid to open up their hydro bills that sit on the kitchen table for days and days on end because they know your rates are going up. Premier, if you don't understand that, I suggest you get out of your bubble and talk to these families we hear from every day.

Will you call an end to your expensive experiments and heel the OPA, which has become the eHealth of the energy sector?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague is confronted with a responsible, sensible, progressive, long-term plan to ensure that we have electricity in the province of Ontario. I understand he opposes that, and given their record in government, I can see where they're coming from.

We understand there are costs associated with revitalizing and modernizing our electricity system. When we're done, we will have in fact revitalized over 80% of our electricity system.

There are things that we're going to do specifically to help Ontario ratepayers. I'll get into those momentarily, but in each and every instance where we proposed to help ratepayers, my colleague has opposed that. I'll get into those details momentarily.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, here's the reality: Your expensive energy experiments are turning the lights off on businesses in the province and you're chasing seniors from their homes. The runaway OPA bureaucracy is resulting in skyrocketing hydro bills. Your smart-meter experiment has been nothing more than a tax machine to take more money out of people's pockets. All told, as you know, Premier, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters report that families will be paying an additional \$732 more per year as a result.

Let me tell you about some of those families. Families in Barrie, Richmond Hill and Markham will be paying \$60 more each and every month. Families in Toronto, Etobicoke and Scarborough will see their bills go from \$149 a month today to \$210 a month. Premier, why do you see Ontario families as an open-ended ATM for your energy experiments?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I say, with the greatest respect to my colleague, that I just don't believe his numbers. But I'll tell you about a few numbers which are very important. We are proposing an Ontario energy and property tax credit which, if passed, will provide \$1.3 billion every year in tax relief for families. My honourable colleague maintains that he will vote against this measure. They're for northern Ontario energy costs. We have in place a plan for up to \$130 for a single person and up to \$200 for a family every year. My colleagues will not be supporting this. Then there's our northern industrial electricity rate package, a \$150-million plan that will help reduce electricity prices for northern Ontario businesses by approximately 25%.

In each and every instance where we've put forward relief for ratepayers, business or homeowners, they vote against those measures.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the \$732 more a year families will pay because of your energy experiments comes from the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. You've heard me say that many times. And maybe you don't believe the manufacturers and exporters. Maybe you think they're making this up. But let me ask you to do this: Just go to see one family in Ottawa. Ask them to open up their hydro bill for you, and you'll see that it's going up from \$143 to \$205 a month. Just talk to one family in your hometown of Ottawa.

In Peterborough, in Mississauga, in Brampton, we'll similarly see bills going from \$138 to \$200 a month. And families in Lindsay, whose monthly hydro bill is \$167, will soon pay a whopping \$229 a month.

Premier, when will you rein in your expensive energy experiments, your eHealth experiment at the OPA, show some mercy on families and help understand what families—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're not going to go back to the days of Conservative government irresponsibility when it comes to managing our electricity system. We're not going to put in place emergency diesel generators in our cities. We're not going to put homeowners and businesses at risk of brownouts and blackouts. We're not going to reopen our coal-fired generation, although they would like us to do that. We're not going to eliminate our Green Energy Act and the thousands and thousands of jobs that that is spurring on as part of the evolution of the Ontario economy. We're not going back there. We're going to continue to find ways to move forward.

We will invest in new generation, we will invest in new transmission, we will work with families when it

comes to conservation and we will work with families when it comes to these kinds of energy tax credits, which I would ask my honourable colleague to support.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Ontario families are scrambling to deal with sky-high hydro bills. Does the Premier think it's fair to actually ask consumers to pay even more just to ensure healthy profits for hydro utilities?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to speak to this again. I think we really need to be focused in terms of what's happening to electricity in Ontario. First of all, rates are going up. My colleagues opposite are not prepared to accept that, and they're not prepared to understand why it is that that is happening. I take it that their implicit, if not shortly to be explicit, position will be that they're going to freeze rates; they're not going to go up one penny in the province of Ontario. And that, in a word, is irresponsible. The fact of the matter is that we have to make significant new investments in an outdated, dilapidated and rundown electricity system.

We're going to invest billions and billion of dollars in new transmission, new generation and new conservation. We're getting rid of coal; we're bringing in clean, green electricity; and we're going to harness the power of the wind and the sun and biomass. We're going to do something that our children will be proud of.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last year, the Ontario Energy Board held a hearing to decide if there needed to be any change in what is called the return-on-equity rate; in other words, how much profit utility companies needed. Independent Canadian experts at these hearings said that no change was needed, but American experts brought in by the big utilities said that profits should be higher and Ontario should be paying more for those profits. They won, and now households are on the hook for \$240 million in new profits.

Why should families, struggling with their bills, fork over an extra \$60 a year just to fatten the profits of already-profitable utilities?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: What I can do and will do is speak to what we're doing here in the Ontario government. Again, we're going to put into place—and we'd love to have the honourable member's party's support in this regard—\$1.3 billion a year in tax relief for families in our new Ontario energy and property tax credit. That's something that we can do through the provincial government, and I would ask my honourable colleague to support that effort.

There's also our northern Ontario energy credit: \$130 for a single person and \$200 for a family. It would be great if we had the support of the NDP in that measure as well.

For a long time, they talked about the challenges faced by industries in the north when it comes to their electricity costs, so we put in place the northern industrial

electricity rate program. It's a \$150-million plan that will help reduce electricity prices for businesses by approximately 25%. Again, I would ask my honourable colleague to support that measure as well.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, something just doesn't smell right here. Finance experts from the University of Toronto and York University argued that the current formula was just fine, maybe even a little bit generous. The hired-gun American experts argued that utility profits were far too low in Ontario, that Ontarians should be paying more. The utilities got exactly what they wanted. Can the Premier now explain to hard-working Ontarians why \$240 million—\$60 per household—is coming out of their pockets just to pad the profits of these utilities?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague of the NDP record when they were in government. They raised hydro rates by 40%. They built no new electrical supply in Ontario in five years. They paid \$150 million to cancel our lifeline with Manitoba. They voted against putting the Conservative price cap on and then they voted against taking the Conservative price cap off. They ended all conservation initiatives. Those savings would have equalled, had they maintained those in place, 5,200 megawatts by the year 2000. That is their record. We have a responsible record. It is not an easy record for Ontario families; we understand that. We're investing heavily in new generation and transmission. There are costs associated with that. We're going to continue to work with families to help them manage those costs.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier, who actually needs to worry about his own record. Between smart meters that don't work, sweetheart deals for private power companies and of course the HST, families are being squeezed in this province. Harold and Sandra Douglas from Campbellford write, "For 62 days, from November 24, 2009, to January 25, 2010, our total bill was \$734.42 for hydro, a simply outrageous amount."

Mr. and Mrs. Douglas want to know: With all of the increases, how can the Premier justify hiking their bill by another \$60 by giving already profitable utilities another handout?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague says she doesn't like our plan to increase electricity supply in Ontario. She puts no alternative plan forward and she says she doesn't like ours. I take it from that that she doesn't like the fact we are eliminating coal-fired generation in Ontario. I take it from that that she doesn't like the fact that we are creating an entire new industry for clean and green electricity generation, creating some 50,000 jobs. I take it from that that she doesn't like the

new 500 high-tech jobs in Guelph being put there by Canadian Solar. She doesn't like the 300-some jobs that are going into Sault Ste. Marie, put there by Heliene Canada, who are opening up a solar module plant. She doesn't like the 900 new jobs coming from Siemens, which her own colleague is asking go to the city of Hamilton.

We will continue to find a way to work with families when it comes to managing their costs. We'll also keep moving forward to make sure we have an intelligent, long-term electricity plan in place for our homes and our businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I've actually heard from more Ontarians. Dorothy MacMenamin from Napanee says that her hydro bill has risen from \$90 in 2005 to \$171 today and writes, "I am angry." Josie Roberts from Perth writes, "At age 70, I'm feeling squeezed even though I own my own home, and stress adds to poor health in the future."

The Premier needs to explain to Ms. Roberts and Ms. MacMenamin why his government would raise utility profit margins, hiking their bills by another \$60, when experts said profit margins were just fine as they are.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It would have been nice had we inherited an energy system from the NDP and the Conservatives that was in a state of good repair, that was robust, that was dynamic, that was modernized, was not laden with debt and not dilapidated, but those were not our circumstances. Our responsibility in the face of those circumstances was to act responsibly. That's what we have done and that's what we will continue to do.

My honourable colleague says that we should freeze rates in the province of Ontario. That would not be helpful. That would not provide the assurance to our businesses and homeowners that they need to know, when they flick on the switch, the lights are going to come on. More than that, when the lights come on now, they're coming predominantly from clean, green electricity and they're also helping to create good, new jobs which Ontario families count on.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I've said it before and I'll say it again: This Premier needs to start listening to Ontarians.

Jennifer Seebeck writes this: "I'm just worried because we bought a larger house last year and I've just found out that I'm expecting. In buying our house, we budgeted for a higher hydro bill, but I opened our bill the other day and it had doubled!"

Kelly Lynch from Oakville adds, "I received my hydro bill and it was \$800. I had just paid \$652 two months ago. Help me!"

As people like Ms. Seebeck and Mr. Lynch look for some hydro relief, why did the Premier allow utilities to hike the bills by another 60 bucks?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I can't agree with my colleague, who is proposing that we freeze electricity

prices in the province of Ontario. That, in large measure, was what got us into this mess in the first place, because we didn't act responsibly and we weren't forthright with the people of Ontario, especially ratepayers.

The fact of the matter is, we inherited a system in a terrible state of disrepair. We were at risk of brownouts and a blackout. We knew we had to make some massive investments. We have done that and we will continue to do that.

At the same time, we're investing heavily in conservation. At the same time, we're bringing on line new jobs to create energy from the wind and the sun. We also want to work with our families, in particular, who are being challenged by these electricity rate increases. We understand that. If there was another way around this, believe me, we would have found it.

We've got to make these investments. There are costs associated with that. We will continue to find ways to work with families to help them address their costs.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Premier. In just five years since the McGuinty Liberals created it, the Ontario Power Authority has spent \$223 million. Even though it was initially billed as a virtual and transitional entity, the OPA billed Ontario families \$35 million on concrete and capital projects. Families paid \$88 million for the OPA staff and board. They paid almost the same amount for consulting contracts.

The OPA isn't subject to freedom of information, so I have to ask, Premier: Has Liberal-friendly Courtyard opened an energy practice?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Ontario Power Authority has been asked to assume a number of responsibilities around building stronger conservation, a well-planned, reliable, clean energy system, eliminating coal, and bringing on renewables: wind and solar energy. I can understand why the Conservatives don't support that, because they don't support any of those very critical initiatives.

The fact of the matter is that the Leader of the Opposition had his chance. He sat in cabinet and he did nothing to tackle these very important challenges. He did nothing to invest in a strong, modern system. He did nothing to invest in a cleaner energy supply. He did nothing to invest in reliability. He was preoccupied with selling off hydro assets. He was—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock—no, keep the clock running. Sergeant-at-Arms, this is two days in a row that these props have appeared. If these props appear on Monday, without warning, the members will be named.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We are hurling insults across the floor and calling one another "juven-

ile,” and I’m sure that students and viewers at home must be wondering who is juvenile.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The difference between us and them is that we want to take Ontario forward; they want to take us backwards. The difference between us and them is that they are afraid of the future. We’re seizing the future so we can build a strong, reliable, clean energy system for our generation and future generations. They simply don’t believe in that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1100

Mr. John Yakabuski: No wonder the McGuinty Liberals don’t want their friends exposed to freedom of information. While the OPA hasn’t produced a long-term energy plan, families are paying more for the cost of the OPA’s promotional giveaway of air miles to the first 150,000 families who pledge to become “laundry smart.” This is on top of the almost \$80 million in sweetheart consulting—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Finance will please come to order. I would like to hear—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I don’t need assistance from others in the chamber.

The member from Renfrew, please continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: This is on top of the almost \$80 million in sweetheart consulting deals the OPA has handed out. The Ontario PC caucus has learned that the OPA’s new advertising campaign, which is essentially Liberal spin, will add another \$3 million to the hydro bills.

With all the money that families are paying for the OPA’s Liberal spin, are you thinking of changing the name to the Ontario propaganda authority?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I can understand why the Tories would not want Ontarians to know all the good things that are happening in the province of Ontario when it comes to energy. I can understand why the Tories would not want Ontarians to know about the 8,000 new megawatts of energy we’ve brought on. I can understand why the Tories would not want Ontarians to know that they have saved 1,700 megawatts of energy through our conservation efforts. I can understand why they wouldn’t want Ontarians to know that. I can understand why they wouldn’t want Ontarians to know about the 5,000 kilometres of transmission we’ve invested in to build a more reliable system for the people of Ontario and this province. I can understand why they wouldn’t want to know that.

I can understand why they wouldn’t want Ontarians to know we’re building a stronger, more reliable and cleaner system of energy in this province: because that would shine the light on their record, which delivered a weak, unreliable and dirty system.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order. I would ask the members to come to order. Minister of Finance. Member from Renfrew. Order. Member from Nepean.

Perhaps you all need to come back to Elgin county and enjoy some of the good fresh air at the International Plowing Match.

New question.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier; maybe we need to bring him to the Far North and find out just how much we need a government to help us.

My question to the Premier is as follows. Yesterday the Environmental Commissioner, in his press conference in regard to his annual report, was asked questions by the media in regard to First Nations who are offside with Bill 191, the Far North planning act, and how that would hamper development should the Far North nations not be on side. He said, “If these [disputes] aren’t resolved, then the whole thing will degrade into conflict. And we won’t get the jobs.”

My question to you is simply this: Why are you moving forward with Bill 191 when absolutely nobody in northern Ontario supports it, and we know it will add to conflict?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I’m really pleased to answer this question and to comment on what has been happening over the last few weeks.

Certainly, I was really pleased to have had the opportunity to visit the Far North this summer. I visited eight different communities and was able to talk with a number of chiefs and elders and young people.

I was disappointed when we got to clause-by-clause consideration, when the opposition failed to put any amendments on the table to improve the legislation. In fact, they walked out of the hearings. It would have been really helpful had they stayed at the table because this is about land use planning and protection of the Far North, and we need the opposition to participate in that conversation. It’s only healthy, because we believe in land use planning. We think it’s an important thing to do as well as protecting the Far North.

It’s important that we have all those parties come to the table and participate in that conversation. This is the beginning of the conversation. We want to continue to work with our First Nations communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, the minister says she went to eight communities in the Far North. Let me ask you this: When there is going to be civil disobedience on the part of First Nations in places in the Ring of Fire, when there will be civil disobedience on behalf of First Nations because they will not allow their future generations to live the experience that they’ve had of living in poverty and being left out of the economic benefit that can come

from the natural resources, will this government go to those First Nations and try to deal with trying to fix the damage that you've done under Bill 191, or are you going to be sending in the police—or will you send them to jail, as you did in the case of KI?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I think we all know that there are some unique opportunities in the north, and this is about working together. It's about working with First Nations and northern Ontarians, about building on all that potential. Together, we're going to create Ontario jobs and we're going to support families in the north while we protect the boreal forest region.

Resource development in the Far North is one of the best economic opportunities to come across Ontario in a very long time. We want to lead it and we want our communities to be part of it. We put in legislation, which is on the table, that will allow First Nations to direct that land use planning, decide whether they're going to do it and approve it.

This is historic legislation. We've never done business like this before, and it's important to recognize that that conversation has happened over the summer. It will continue onwards. This is about working together with First Nations communities, and we appreciate that we have land use plans in place now. We will continue—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. My riding of Scarborough—Rouge River is home to many newcomers who have come to our province to contribute their skills and experience, and it is our responsibility to help newcomers in my community and across Ontario get the best start possible in their new home. This is important because, within a decade, immigrants will make up nearly 100% of Ontario's net labour growth.

To ensure that our newcomers succeed, we must help them access the settlement services, language training and job training that they need. Can the minister explain what the government is doing to help newcomers and their families get the settlement services they need?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I certainly thank the member for this very important question. Ontario is very fortunate, in fact, proud to receive almost half of all newcomers that arrive in Canada each and every year. That's about 120,000 newcomers. Over the last five years, these newcomers have benefited from the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, an agreement that invests in our newcomers and their families. This agreement has funded settlement services, language training and other resources to help our newcomers prosper.

Earlier this year, however, the first Canada-Ontario immigration agreement expired, and unfortunately we are still waiting for Ottawa to spend the remaining \$207 million that they promised our newcomers under that first agreement. We've also repeatedly asked the federal gov-

ernment to begin negotiations on a new comprehensive agreement that benefits our newcomers.

Today, on behalf of Ontario's newcomers, I urge the federal government to immediately come to the table so we can negotiate a new agreement that puts the needs of our newcomers—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Helping our newcomers get settled and integrated must be a priority of governments of all levels, whether they are federal, provincial or municipal. Each level of government must work together to help our newcomers get the services they need, when they need them and wherever they need them. Governments must make the settlement process simple, efficient and effective so that local needs of newcomers are addressed.

The minister said that he wants the federal government to begin negotiations on a new agreement that puts the needs of newcomers first. Can the minister tell us what Ontario wants in a new, comprehensive agreement with our federal government?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Quite frankly, Ontario needs a new partnership that puts the needs of our newcomers first, a partnership that gives Ontario and settlement agencies increased ability to meet the local needs of our newcomers. We need a new partnership that gives Ontario a greater voice in immigration funding and greater control over how that funding is disbursed. This new partnership would improve the delivery and the responsiveness of newcomer services by aligning both the federal and the provincial programs.

Yesterday, I tabled a resolution in this Legislature calling on the federal government to give Ontario newcomers the remaining \$207 million from the first agreement and to immediately begin negotiations on a new comprehensive agreement. Helping our newcomers succeed is a priority of the McGuinty government, because when our newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

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COMMUNITY SAFETY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. You are a member of the legislation and regulations cabinet committee that recommended and rubber-stamped the secret G20 law. Why did you participate in rubber-stamping this law?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the member that you need to ask a question that relates to a minister's portfolio.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Attorney General. You are a member of the legislation and regulations cabinet committee that recommended the secret G20 law that was rubber-stamped by the Premier. Why did you support the rubber-stamping of this legislation?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm very pleased that yesterday a review was called by the government into the Public Works Protection Act legislation. As you know,

my colleague the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services called this.

It is noteworthy that former Chief Justice McMurtry is leading this review, a person who, for more than a decade, stood in the chair that I stand in as Attorney General, who has not only been the chief justice of the province of Ontario, but brings to this review—I think we would all agree—a sense of knowledge, passion, impartiality, determination, to give the best possible recommendations and a fearlessness in saying what needs to be said.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The terms of the McMurtry review have nothing to do with holding those accountable, like the Minister of Health Promotion, for the secret G20 law—and anything that they had to do to take in account for. The Minister of Health Promotion was at the table that thought it was a good idea to pass the secret G20 law. So were the Attorney General and the ministers of revenue, citizenship and immigration, municipal affairs, natural resources, labour, and consumer affairs. Guess who else was at the table? Let me tell you: the members for Peterborough, Ottawa Centre, Ottawa–Orléans, Mississauga–Streetsville, Willowdale, Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Ajax–Pickering and Algoma–Manitoulin. They all had seats at the table when this secret G20 law was stamped, so why didn't one of them speak up while people were being arrested in this city?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As the member will know, it was the Prime Minister of Canada who named Toronto as the host. Toronto was the host of a conference. It was the federal government, led by the Prime Minister of Canada, the RCMP and the Toronto Police Service that requested additional security measures.

It is very, very important to remember the context in which the question is asked—and I'm sure my friend opposite will be able to call up the Prime Minister and ask him to conduct any inquiry that she wishes and provide any answer that he has to the question. She lives very close to the Prime Minister's residence.

We're conducting a review with former Chief Justice McMurtry to get the best possible advice.

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. There have been no amendments to the Condominium Act since 1998, and during that time, we have seen a huge increase in the number of people living in condominiums, and with it, a large number of problems. Condo owners are subject to a Wild West legal system that gives them no protection whatsoever.

I spoke to owners from northern Etobicoke who are paying \$1,000 a month in maintenance fees and who have had \$800,000 in reserve funds disappear—and the government acts as if there is nothing wrong with the Condominium Act.

When will the government admit that people are suffering because of weak legislation and change the act to give them better protection?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Obviously, this has to do with the member's private member's bill that's coming up later on today.

I should tell the member that yes, he is correct that there have been no amendments made since 1998. We are currently doing a questionnaire and a survey on-site. We've received something like 2,500 comments already. The questionnaire, which is accessible on the ministry's website, will be open and available to the general public until about the middle of October. We will be taking a look at any suggestion that comes along in order to better protect consumers, in order to better protect the condominium owners, and we'll take a look at the member's act as well to see how that fits into it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: If the minister is proud of his government's inaction over the last three years, and if he's so proud of his little survey, then maybe he might join me in the rally at 12 o'clock and give that information to the people. I invite you.

A condo owner from Guelph spent \$30,000 to sue a developer over a badly constructed basement, and that's just to get a hearing. A 75-year-old woman from Richmond Hill called us because her property manager is threatening to sell her unit for no apparent reason. A downtown Toronto woman got injured in her elevator and was forced to pay \$1,800 to get the same elevator professionally inspected.

This afternoon, I will be debating my bill, Bill 79. This will be my third attempt to change the Condominium Act. Will the government finally respond to the concerns the condominium owners have been raising for years by supporting Bill 79?

Hon. John Gerretsen: The member knows that the condominium owners already have rights and protections with respect to the condominium corporations right now. They are members of the corporation. They can be members of the board of directors that make these kinds of decisions. They can go to their annual meetings.

But, as I mentioned before, we are doing a survey right now. We've already heard 2,500 different responses. We will be tabulating that to see what changes should be made, because he is quite correct that there are over 500,000 condominium unit owners across this province.

What we're all about on this side of the House is to give the consumer the best protection possible that they can have in the province of Ontario.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We all know that cancer is a serious issue that has devastating effects on individuals who are diagnosed, as well as their families and friends. In order for our people, and especially our children, to have the brightest future, we need to make sure that they are able to live full and prosperous lives well into adulthood. We know that the prospects for children surviving cancer are high, but we need to remain diligent.

Could the minister tell the House what she is doing to protect our people, especially our children, from that awful disease?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member for London—Fanshawe is absolutely right. We need to make sure that our kids, especially those diagnosed with cancer, get what they need so they can live prosperous, healthy lives well into adulthood.

Today, we're recognizing that September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. More than 400 children are diagnosed with cancer every year in Ontario; 60 to 70 of those are treated in London at the Children's Hospital of Western Ontario. I recently visited the hospital and welcomed Dr. Paul Gibson. He's joining a team of three oncologists to provide better care for kids with cancer. Our government is fully supportive of the hospital's tireless efforts to ensure that each patient and their family receives the best possible care and support.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of POGO, the Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario. Many members are in the gallery today, and I look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's great to hear that there are tangible options for children and their families as they move through their cancer treatment.

You mentioned the role of the Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario, or POGO, and their work in helping children with cancer. We need organizations like POGO to continue this important grassroots work in providing care for children with cancer. With 14 centres across the province, POGO has been able to provide invaluable care, easing the child's journey through, as well as after cancer treatment.

Could the minister please explain to this House the important role that POGO plays in pediatric cancer treatment?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: POGO is a truly wonderful organization led by wonderful people. Since 1983, POGO and their growing number of partners—hospitals, other organizations and volunteers—have walked with children throughout their cancer journey. We are proud to partner with POGO.

Last year, we provided them with \$5.4 million for programs and services that they provide. One of those services is after-care services—services for kids after they have completed their cancer treatments. POGO also provides nurses who support children, their families and local health caregivers during the very difficult time when active treatment is going on.

1120

Today, about 3,000 kids in Ontario are getting cancer care. That means that 3,000 families need our support getting their families through that ordeal. The good news is—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. I'm pleased to hear the minister's concern for children. In the east gallery, anxiously awaiting the answer to this question, are Melodie and Peter Hughes, parents of 17-year-old Cody Hughes. Rheumatoid arthritis has virtually disintegrated the joints in Cody's jaw. He's in desperate need of having those joints replaced with titanium joints. The pain is excruciating and continuous. His morphine prescription is at the dose of a dying cancer patient. The family has been advised that Cody will have to wait four years for a procedure to remedy this situation.

It has been six weeks since I wrote to the minister and asked her to intervene. I have yet to hear from the minister. I can only assume that that's because she hasn't received the letter. I ask the minister this: Will she agree, following question period, to meet for five minutes—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to say to Cody's parents, yes, of course, I would be honoured to meet with you after question period. We'll make those arrangements.

I want to thank the member for bringing this situation to my attention. It is one that I have been informed of, and we are looking very carefully at what we can do to make sure that this young man gets the care he needs as quickly as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to thank the minister for her reply. I am concerned, however, about the kind of research that her office has made into this situation. Although I wasn't responded to for six weeks by her office, when the media made an inquiry, Fil Martino of Rogers' First Local news received an email, in fact, within hours. Here was the quote from Ivan Langrish: "I know there are several hospitals which do pediatric dental procedures. Do you know if their doctor has explored referring Cody to another physician which may have a shorter wait time for the procedure?"

This shows a complete ignorance of the reality. There are only two doctors in the entire province who perform these procedures. The funding, which was set at \$250,000 in 1995, has not increased one nickel—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the initial question, this is an issue that I am committed to looking into. I will happily meet with the parents following question period.

I know that these are very, very difficult challenges facing our health care system, and we are committed to increasing funding in health care every single year going forward. Sadly, it is the party opposite that has chosen to take a position to reduce health care spending in this province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a second. Order.

I would just remind the honourable members that, yes, we do work in an environment that can get heated, but we do have to ensure that we have the ability to ask questions and hear the responses to questions, and that we do so in a respectful manner. There have been a number of occasions during today's question period when there have been interjections across the floor, member to member. I would just say to those individuals—because others hear that, and it starts to raise the temperature in the House as a whole. If you have personal comments that you desire to make to one another, there are lobbies on either side of the chamber, and I would encourage members to have those discussions out there.

The leader of the third party.

NUCLEAR WASTE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Seventy Great Lakes mayors and dozens of environmental groups and First Nations communities all oppose transporting 16 radioactive nuclear steam generators through the Great Lakes to Sweden. This shipment was not part of Bruce Power's initial proposal, and it exceeds by 50 times international limits for radioactivity on a single ship.

Why isn't the McGuinty government taking action to prevent this unprecedented and unnecessary threat to our Great Lakes?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I understand that Bruce Power has applied to ship 16 decommissioned steam generators to Sweden via the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway.

The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission is mandated to protect the health and safety and security of Canadians as well as the environment. I understand that this process that they are undertaking will allow Bruce to reduce the volume of waste that they have in storage by about 90%. That's a pretty good contribution in terms of improving environmental circumstances here in this province and across the country.

But it is the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission that's responsible for these kinds of shipments. I think the member opposite knows that.

We know the member doesn't support nuclear energy. The member should know that that's 50% of our generation. That's the workhorse of our system. We certainly will always be working with the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission to ensure that we're providing that power responsibly—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government and this minister keep saying that this is a federal responsibility, but the Ontario government is responsible for the protection of our Great Lakes. The government of this prov-

ince owns Ontario Power Generation, which owns and operates the radioactive waste site where the generators are stored.

When will the McGuinty government finally stop passing the buck and order OPG to slam the brakes on this hare-brained plan to ship radioactive nuclear waste through the Great Lakes?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I understand the concern the member is raising, but it is the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission that is responsible for these issues. We can't rewrite the Constitution just because you want us to.

I think what's at issue is here is, once again, the NDP is opposed to something. They're opposed to everything. They're opposing our investments in aging infrastructure. You're opposing our measures that we're taking to create jobs and create an—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East will please come to order, and he knows that he should be in his seat.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: They oppose clean, reliable, emission-free nuclear power that generates half of our energy supply. They're opposing the modernization of our energy system. They're opposing support for northern Ontario and helping them deal with energy bills. And they oppose the agreement with Samsung, which is creating 16,000 jobs in this country.

This is the member that had the gumption to get up on her feet just a few weeks ago to talk about jobs. She wants—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Ma question s'adresse à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. Madame la Ministre, samedi prochain, le 25 septembre—dans deux jours—tout l'Ontario va célébrer pour la première fois le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. Nous savons que la présence française en Ontario remonte à presque 400 ans, et aujourd'hui plus de 600 000 francophones vivent en Ontario.

Je représente un comté avec une forte représentation francophone où beaucoup de gens ne parlent que le français. Il est important de reconnaître que les francophones sont une des communautés qui ont fondé notre belle province et notre beau pays.

Madame la Ministre, est-ce que vous croyez que cette journée dédiée aux Franco-Ontariens et aux Franco-Ontariennes atteint ce but visé?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais remercier le député de Glengarry—Prescott—Russell pour sa question et pour son appui pour les francophones. Notre gouvernement déploie des efforts constants afin de soutenir les communautés francophones fortes. Le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes est une étape de

plus dans cette direction. Cette journée sera reconnue dans les quatre coins de la province. C'est un moment idéal pour faire le lancement de cette grande première.

Cette année, nous célébrons le 35^e anniversaire du dévoilement du drapeau franco-ontarien, le 100^e anniversaire de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, le 35^e anniversaire du Festival franco-ontarien, le 25^e anniversaire de la Fondation franco-ontarienne et bien d'autres anniversaires. Alors, ce sont des marques importantes de notre histoire et c'est pourquoi cette première journée a une signification particulière cette année.

J'invite tous les membres de l'Assemblée à célébrer ce jour avec les Franco-Ontariens de leur circonscription.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Madame la Ministre, comme symbole, le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes nous démontre l'engagement du gouvernement McGuinty envers les Franco-Ontariens.

La communauté franco-ontarienne est la deuxième plus importante population francophone au Canada après le Québec, et elle a grandement contribué au développement et à la prospérité de cette province. Donc, je suis fier que samedi, nous pouvons célébrer ensemble cette histoire.

Madame la Ministre, est-ce que vous pensez qu'un geste purement symbolique, comme cette journée, est satisfaisant pour notre communauté francophone?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Le gouvernement McGuinty, notre gouvernement, a toujours été du côté des francophones. Cette journée de célébration en est une preuve éloquente. Avant le gouvernement McGuinty, l'Office des affaires francophones a subi de nombreux revers. Depuis 2003, les Franco-Ontariens ont reçu plus d'investissements dans le domaine de l'éducation, de la culture et de la santé. Nous avons bien avancé. Nous avons créé le Commissariat aux services en français, nous avons revitalisé TFO en la rendant autonome, nous avons adopté une définition plus inclusive de « franco-phonie », nous avons créé des entités de planification pour les services de santé en français et nous avons redynamisé l'Hôpital Montfort.

Donc, ce samedi, nous avons tous beaucoup à célébrer : non seulement une histoire francophone, mais aussi un futur avec beaucoup d'espoir.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, farmers have told you over and over again that the current support programs are not working and that they need a business risk management program in order to survive.

You said the program would not work without federal support, but then six weeks ago you announced the program for grain farmers.

If it works for grain farmers with only provincial dollars, why won't it work for all the other sectors in our agricultural communities?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I do appreciate the question from that side of the House. We know that what the farmers are looking for is bankability, predictability and stability. The work that the grain and oilseeds did in the development of their risk management program came from the grassroots up. It addressed the cost of production and it spoke to the need for what is in store for them in the future. By extending the grain and oilseeds, they have been absolutely crystal clear: In order for the program to work, all three have to be at the table.

We have heard from G&O, we have heard from the non-supply-managed sector, that the producers, the province and our federal government have to be at the table in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Minister, farmers couldn't be more clear. Beef farmers, pork producers, and fruit and vegetable growers are all in trouble, and they are all asking for the same thing: a business risk management program based on the cost of production.

Our leader, the leader of the PC Party, has committed to a risk management program for all farmers in all sectors.

Farmers have consulted with their grassroots. They've done their research and provided you with all the information you need. They have worked together like you asked. So, Minister, will you commit today to immediately funding the provincial portion of the business risk management program for all sectors? If not, could you please explain to farmers why you believe one sector deserves more support than the other sectors?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I did happen to notice that that was a position the Leader of the Opposition put forward. I've got to say that the farmers found it just a little passing strange, because when they were in government, they didn't provide any income stabilization—nothing. We have put \$1.8 billion to support our farmers. So when we see the Leader of the Opposition stand at the plowing match and commit to that, well, why didn't they then? They understand the track record.

But we are working with the coalition. We understand that the programs aren't working. We have taken that to the federal government and taken it to the table of the federal-provincial-territorial, and for the first time, the federal government has acknowledged that ag stability is not working for our farmers.

TOURISM

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is to the Minister of Tourism. Across northern Ontario, bookings at tourist resorts are down by between 40% and 60%. This has devastated the economy in many northern Ontario communities. Can I ask: What is the McGuinty government doing to help tourist operators survive these devastating economic conditions?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We are certainly very conscious of the challenges that are being faced by the tour-

ism industry in northern Ontario, but I can tell you that some of the economic development opportunities that are being brought forward to us, which we are very excited about, I think are helping them a great deal.

Certainly I know that there was a report brought forward which Greg Sorbara worked very hard on in terms of developing some opportunities for the tourism sector in northern—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I would just remind the honourable member that we use riding names, not individual names.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is that this was a very important report that was brought forward, which has given some real impetus to some of the tourism development in terms of setting up regional tourism zones in the north that we know are going to make a great difference. Each one of the members in northern Ontario is working very, very hard with the tourism sector—certainly I am, along with all my colleagues—to help them develop plans for the future that will bring them even more prosperity in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: Speaker, I heard a lot of words; I'm quite sure I didn't hear an answer.

Let me spell out the nature of the problem to the minister. Tourist resorts in northern Minnesota do not charge the HST. Tourist resorts in Manitoba do not charge the HST. If someone is coming to a resort to spend \$5,000 for a week's stay, the difference amounts to \$300 or \$400 a week cheaper if they stay in Manitoba or in northern Minnesota. That's exactly what's happening. If I can quote the executive director of Sunset Country Travel Association, he says, "In my opinion, the HST is a spending killer from a consumer point of view."

Your government is killing the tourism industry across northern Ontario. What are you going to do to fix that?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The member is ignoring the many positive developments that have taken place across the province in terms of tourism, let alone across northern Ontario. Since 2003, we have invested almost \$700 million in our tourism agencies, and certainly across the north—we have \$65 million in each of the next two years to support the transition to the regional tourism organizations I referenced in my first response, and \$40 million in annual funding to support the tourism region starting in 2012 being very well received by the sector.

The Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership is another very, very positive part of the campaign that we're generating. This has generated more than 1.5 million trips and \$270 million in visitor spending, and our Celebrate Ontario funding, supporting so many festivals all across northern Ontario, was a massive success over this past summer.

We're very pleased to continue to work—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended.

DEFERRED VOTES

FAR NORTH ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE GRAND NORD

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 191, An Act with respect to land use planning and protection in the Far North / Projet de loi 191, Loi relative à l'aménagement et à la protection du Grand Nord.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas	Gravelle, Michael	Pendergast, Leeanna
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoskins, Eric	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Best, Margaret	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Michael A.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Johnson, Rick	Sandals, Liz
Carroll, Aileen	Kular, Kuldeep	Sergio, Mario
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Smith, Monique
Crozier, Bruce	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Duncan, Dwight	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	Murray, Glen R.	
Gerretsen, John	Oraziotti, David	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bisson, Gilles	Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Savoline, Joyce
Clark, Steve	Klees, Frank	Shurman, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Marchese, Rosario	Wilson, Jim
Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
Hillier, Randy	Munro, Julia	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 46; the nays are 26.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

WATER OPPORTUNITIES AND WATER CONSERVATION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DES TECHNOLOGIES DE L'EAU ET LA CONSERVATION DE L'EAU

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 72, An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts in respect of water conservation

and other matters / *Projet de loi 72, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur le développement des technologies de l'eau et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'eau et d'autres questions.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1147 to 1148.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas	Gravelle, Michael	Oraziotti, David
Bartolucci, Rick	Hampton, Howard	Pendergast, Leeanna
Bentley, Christopher	Horwath, Andrea	Phillips, Gerry
Best, Margaret	Hoskins, Eric	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Carroll, Aileen	Johnson, Rick	Sandals, Liz
Chiarelli, Bob	Kular, Kuldip	Sergio, Mario
Crozier, Bruce	Kwinter, Monte	Smith, Monique
Delaney, Bob	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sousa, Charles
Dickson, Joe	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Duncan, Dwight	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Miller, Paul	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fonseca, Peter	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David
Gerretsen, John	Mitchell, Carol	
Gélinas, France	Murray, Glen R.	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Savoline, Joyce
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Shurman, Peter
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hillier, Randy	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 55; the nays are 17.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): So ordered.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome Ms. Susan Birnie, deputy provincial commissioner, Ontario Council, Girl Guides of Canada, and Ms. Lyn Lunsted, past president of the 1st Richvale Trefoil Guild of the Girl Guides, to the House today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GREEN LEGACY PROGRAM

Mr. Ted Arnott: We should never take our trees for granted. They purvey beauty, greenery, shelter and habitat for animals. In removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, trees support life on earth. Yet we are planting only three million trees per year in southern Ontario—not enough, says Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller. The commissioner's annual report, released yesterday, calls on the government to raise its target of 50 million trees planted in southern Ontario by 2020 to a total of one billion trees, which is certainly an ambitious goal.

But one municipality in particular is already doing its part. In fact, the county of Wellington has been leading the way since 2004 when it launched its impressive Green Legacy tree-planting program. This initiative has brought communities together, involving local environmental groups, service clubs, schools, municipalities and private landowners, farmers and other organizations. After achieving their goal to plant 150,000 trees in 2004, the county will have planted a staggering one million trees this year. That millionth tree will be planted Sunday, October 3, at the Wellington County Museum and Archives. It's no wonder that the county's Green Legacy program has just received a Grand River watershed award for its outstanding conservation and environmental work with the community.

To the hundreds of leaders and volunteers who have made Green Legacy such a success, thank you, and well done.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Charles Sousa: Our government has made education a priority in the province of Ontario. The initiatives that we have undertaken are helping students to access safer schools and achieve higher test scores. But one of the greatest achievements is the increase in graduation rates due to our Learning to 18 initiative. Learning to 18 requires that our students stay in school until the age of 18 or until they graduate. By providing a range of innovative programs to students, we are helping them to engage more effectively in their learning.

The results of our initiatives in education speak for themselves: 53,000 more students have a high school diploma today than they did under the Hudak-Harris era. This means that more of our students have the education and tools they need to succeed in life. We know that when Ontario students succeed, Ontario excels.

We know that having access to safe and effective education can help provide access to a better future. That's why education remains one of our core priorities. It's vitally important for our students and for the future of Ontario.

TUTUS FOR TANNER

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Last summer I was able to meet some very remarkable people, and it all came about because of Twitter.

Catherine Connors, who's a resident of Bowmanville here in the province of Ontario, made the world aware of her nephew Tanner. He's a boy fighting Duchenne muscular dystrophy, and he fights this disease daily. It's debilitating. Catherine, a great Ontarian, created a run for her nephew. It was called Tutus for Tanner, and I'm sure many of you heard about it.

On the way to New York City, Air Canada disassembled his wheelchair. It went through Twitter. A man from Oakville, Scott Stratten of UnMarketing, tweeted about this. It reached a lady in Nepean named Krista House, and then it reached me at about 10:30 on an evening. My staff and I decided to get involved. We were able to contact the then transportation minister, John Baird, to work with Air Canada, and we were finally able to get—through thousands of people who were following this saga on Twitter—Tanner his wheelchair back.

This Legislature played an exemplary role. We were able to host Tanner and his family here before they went back to British Columbia, and Speaker Peters actually brought this young man on to the floor of this House. Dr. Marie Bountrogianni, a former MPP whom many of us in this chamber are very fond of, also invited Tanner and his family to the Royal Ontario Museum. For Tanner, the most exciting part of Toronto was the fact that the Speaker of the Ontario Legislature lives here, and he was stuck on that the entire time he was here.

I'd also be remiss not to say thank you so much to a man named Jack Matrosov. When I contacted his Mississauga company to see if we could arrange for transportation for Tanner when he was in Toronto, they stepped up to the plate.

We have a great province here and a lot of great people. Tutus for Tanner was a very important event. Thousands of people helped him. They ran for him and they fought for him.

I think it's very important for this Legislature to know what we were able to do in August of this past year.

PAT SILVER

Mr. Michael Prue: Each year the Beach community honours one of its citizens, a citizen who has, through their own extraordinary efforts, enhanced and built the community that we lovingly call the Beach.

This year, citizens will be gathering at the Millennium Gardens at Eastern Avenue and Coxwell Avenue at 5:30 on October 1 to honour the Beach Citizen of the year, Pat Silver. Pat Silver is a member of the Beach Triangle Residents Association. She's been instrumental in helping the Beaches Alternative school, the East Alternative School and the Beach synagogue. She's been instrumental, as well, in helping to found the Danforth Mosaic

BIA, which is doing an amazing job along the Danforth and revitalizing that area and bringing the community to shop in the stores.

One of her accomplishments is that she is a member of the Sphere Clown Band. I was not aware of this, but the Sphere Clown Band is an international organization that travels around the world bringing joy primarily to children, but they've also played at the White House and in China.

So the citizens of the Beach have decided that she is the exemplary citizen whom we will be honouring. Everyone is welcome to come to the Millennium Gardens on October 1 at 5:30, where we'll engrave the stone with the name Pat Silver.

GIRL GUIDES

Mr. Reza Moridi: I am pleased to rise in this House today on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Girl Guides in Canada. Over seven million Girl Guides, ranging from the youngest Sparks through to Brownies, Pathfinders and finally to Rangers, are volunteering in communities across Ontario and Canada. The Guiding movement is active in over 145 countries.

The training that Girl Guides receive will help them to conquer challenges they will face and enable them to become knowledgeable, confident and resourceful citizens. The development of leadership skills will help to ensure that they will mature into active citizens and make a difference in the world.

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This weekend I will have the pleasure to visit an exhibit showcasing the past 100 years of Guiding, being hosted by the Trefoil Guild in Richmond Hill. This branch of the Girl Guides is made up of long-time active members of Guiding, who participate in service projects and provide younger Guides with assistance.

It is my honour to recognize the Girl Guides of Canada today.

LEGION WEEK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to recognize Royal Canadian Legions across Ontario during Legion Week. Legions are a strong advocate for Canadian veterans and their families and are respected community organizations that set an outstanding example of volunteerism. As the representative for Dufferin—Caledon, I want to especially recognize the Orangeville, Shelburne, Alton and Bolton Legions for their contribution to the building of a better community through their programs and fundraising to support many local organizations. We thank you.

Earlier this month, I was pleased to attend the 75th anniversary of the Legion's Colonel Fitzgerald branch in Orangeville. It was a pleasure to celebrate and recognize the branch's distinguished record of service to veterans and their community.

Every event I attend through the Legion, I am reminded of the important role they play in connecting

our youth today with history. The Legion's unwavering support of land, sea and air cadet programs helps foster patriotism and leadership. Whether it is through sponsoring a public speaking event for students, teaching young people the importance of remembrance or supporting a soldier returning from Afghanistan, the Legion is preserving its legacy of service.

I applaud every Legion member for their incredible contributions and outreach to our community. Lest we forget.

FRED OLIVER

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to rise in the Legislature today to recognize a political career without parallel in Oakville. For more than half a century, Fred Oliver has devoted himself tirelessly to serving the community. In fact, Fred's service began before the town of Oakville even officially existed, when, in 1948, Fred was appointed police chief of the township of Trafalgar. He continued in that role when Trafalgar was amalgamated into Oakville, and later served as deputy police chief for the region of Halton. Fred would also serve as president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, and sat on the police services board in the region of Halton, but his priority was always Oakville.

He founded the Town of Oakville Water Air Rescue Force in 1954 and served as commander for 16 years. He volunteered with the Canadian Open, the Lions Club and countless other organizations, Sheridan College and the hospital. He retired from the force in 1980 and was then elected to the first of eight terms on council, where he dedicated himself to improving the lives of those he represented.

Two weeks ago, Fred announced that due to health concerns he would not seek another term on council.

Fred, I would like to thank you for many years of service. I'm truly honoured to have had the opportunity to work with you during our years on council. My best goes out to you, your wife, Irma, and your family, as you begin a very well deserved retirement.

TASTE OF STREETSVILLE

Mr. Bob Delaney: Here is a great secret about fabulous dining in western Mississauga. The second annual Taste of Streetsville began on September 14 and runs until October 8. Mondello Ristorante, Si Andiamo Pasta Plus, Saucy, Enzo's Two Guys from Italy, Nawab Authentic Indian Cuisine, the Franklin House, Cagney's, Cuchulainn's Irish Pub and Cantina Mexicana are among those offering a fantastic three-course meal for—wait for it—\$25. I join with the Streetsville BIA in inviting hungry diners from all over Ontario to enjoy fine dining in Streetsville.

Fifty cents from each meal will be donated to the Credit Valley Hospital Foundation's Young Ambassadors. The foundation's Young Ambassadors are a community of young professional volunteers supporting the foundation's \$45-million Lifetime of Care Campaign.

I would also like to take this opportunity to introduce two old and very close friends of mine, Bonnie and Jim Murray from Fredericton, New Brunswick, who are in Ontario today to attend a reunion meeting of the University of New Brunswick. I welcome them to the Ontario Legislature.

SHERMAN HEALTH SCIENCE RESEARCH CENTRE

Mr. Mario Sergio: Last week, I had the privilege of attending the grand opening of the Sherman Health Science Research Centre at York University, in my riding of York West.

This new state-of-the-art facility features the latest in MRI technology. It gives York researchers and grad students in-house access to the most advanced brain and vision technology. The Sherman Centre boosts the research capacity of York University and strengthens the relationship between the engineering and the health and science fields that strive to advance human health.

Barry Sherman, president and CEO of Apotex, the largest Canadian-owned pharmaceutical company, and his wife, Honey Sherman, a member of the York University Foundation board, generously contributed \$5 million towards this research facility. I would like to thank them for their incredible commitment to advancing York University's position on the world stage as a cutting-edge academic and research institution. I also congratulate the faculty, researchers and grad students who will now have the access to laboratories that are sure to lead the new discoveries and treatments in brain, vision and biomechanics.

I would also like to mention—and I'm very proud, Speaker—the contribution by the province of Ontario. There is no better example than York University to prove our commitment to higher education and research within the province of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO BUY LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'ACHAT D'ALIMENTS LOCAUX PAR LE GOUVERNEMENT DE L'ONTARIO

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 108, An Act to require ministries of the Government of Ontario to buy local, local organic and local sustainable food / Projet de loi 108, Loi exigeant que les ministères du gouvernement de l'Ontario achètent des aliments locaux, des aliments biologiques locaux ou des aliments locaux durables.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Would the member like to make a short statement?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yes. This bill requires ministries of the government of Ontario that spend more than \$25,000 on food in a year to buy food that is local, local-organic or local-sustainable, except where the cost of doing so is more than 10% higher than the cost of buying food that is not local, local-organic or local-sustainable.

The bill further also requires that, beginning in 2012, increasing in 2015 and again in 2020, ministries subject to the act spend a certain minimum percentage of their total annual food expenditures on local, local-organic or local-sustainable food, regardless of the cost of doing so.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je vous remercie de m'accorder ce moment pour rappeler à l'Assemblée législative que samedi le 25 septembre, l'Ontario va célébrer le premier Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. Mes collègues, députés et ministres se souviendront que nous avons adopté à l'unanimité, le 26 avril, la Loi de 2010 sur le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes.

Cette loi vise à reconnaître la contribution incommensurable des francophones à la vitalité culturelle, sociale, économique et politique de l'Ontario. L'année 2010 est le moment idéal pour faire le lancement de cette grande première en Ontario. En effet, cette année l'Ontario célèbre 400 ans de présence française, un jalon important de notre histoire qui sera d'ailleurs fêté au cours des prochaines années.

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En 2010, nous célébrons également le 100^e anniversaire des forces vives francophones au sein de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario. Et la communauté franco-ontarienne commémore aussi le 35^e anniversaire du dévoilement du drapeau franco-ontarien. En 1975, le drapeau avait justement été dévoilé le 25 septembre, date emblématique pour ce Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes.

Le gouvernement de l'Ontario souscrit aux principes énoncés par la convention de l'UNESCO sur la protection et la promotion de la diversité des expressions culturelles. Permettez-moi de citer l'un des principes qui vient corroborer cette loi que nous célébrerons.

Je cite l'UNESCO : « La diversité culturelle constitue un patrimoine commun de l'humanité et elle doit être célébrée et préservée au profit de tous. » Fin de la citation. Ce que les Nations Unies affirment dans ce principe, c'est que tout état démocratique a le devoir de célébrer et de préserver sa culture.

Comme francophone, permettez-moi de redire combien de suis fière que l'Ontario soit un modèle d'ouverture aux cultures, du respect de la différence entre les communautés et de promotion de sa diversité culturelle. L'Ontario est une province d'accueil. Notre avenir dépend de l'immigration et de l'harmonie entre les peuples. C'est pourquoi la dualité linguistique de notre province est une force. C'est pourquoi notre gouvernement est engagé à en faire la promotion.

Depuis 2003, sous le leadership de Dalton McGuinty, nous avons participé activement à l'avancement des francophones par le biais de nouveaux services en français. Le financement des écoles françaises, les garderies et la politique d'aménagement linguistique, ce sont là des réalisations qui font que les écoles françaises de l'Ontario fournissent une qualité supérieure en éducation.

Les collèges francophones et les universités bilingues de l'Ontario connaissent un taux de diplomation plus élevé que la moyenne provinciale. Les investissements dans l'infrastructure, et surtout la formation et la recherche, sont axés sur l'avancement économique et social de l'Ontario au profit de tous.

Dans le secteur de la santé, je suis aussi tellement fière que les francophones aient une voix dans la gestion et la performance des soins de santé en français grâce à la création de nouvelles entités de planification francophones cette année.

En bref, notre gouvernement est porteur d'un message puissant. Ce message, c'est celui de la diversité culturelle. Ce message, c'est celui de l'harmonie entre les peuples. C'est ça que nous allons célébrer le 25 septembre, et j'en suis fière.

Monsieur le Président, chers collègues, le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes est une belle occasion pour poursuivre la mission d'ouverture, de développement et de tolérance qui est la nôtre. Le 25 septembre, je vous invite tous à fêter avec tous les francophones 400 ans d'histoire collective en Ontario.

Je voudrais aussi remercier le député de Leeds-Grenville qui, samedi dernier, a célébré avec les francophones de sa circonscription la journée franco-ontarienne un peu à l'avance, mais c'était très bien. Alors, je dis à tout le monde, bonne fête, et bonne fête à tous les Franco-Ontariens.

WORLD HEART DAY

Hon. Margaret R. Best: September 26 is World Heart Day, and today I rise to remind this House and Ontarians about the importance of this day and the challenges that the issue of heart disease poses for our province and the health of our citizens.

Today, nine in 10 Canadians have at least one risk factor for heart disease and stroke. These factors include smoking, physical inactivity, obesity and high blood pressure, just to name a few.

Heart disease, along with stroke, is responsible for one in three deaths in Canada. According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, groups now considered at risk for

heart disease and stroke include young adults in their 20s and 30s, women between 35 and 45, baby boomers within the 50-to-64 age range, ethno-cultural communities and aboriginal people. These statistics are alarming indeed. Ontarians obesity levels across the age spectrum are at dangerously high levels, with a significant portion of the population at unhealthy weights.

According to the Childhood Obesity Foundation, a Canadian-based non-profit organization, obesity rates in Canadian children have almost tripled in the past 25 years, and now approximately 26% of children aged 2 to 17 are overweight or obese. If this trend continues, in 20 years, 70% of the 35- to 44-year-olds in Canada will be overweight or obese.

As highlighted in the federal government's recent sodium working group report, Canadians consume too much sodium—as much as two and a quarter times the recommended limit for adults. This excessive sodium consumption puts individuals at risk for hypertension, which contributes to stroke and also to heart disease. High sodium consumption is a serious public health concern, and I urge Ontarians to reduce their personal sodium consumption as part of an overall healthy diet.

It is important to note that heart disease and stroke can largely be prevented by taking steps to improve your own health and the health of Ontario's children. Indeed, health promotion is everybody's business. I challenge each and every Ontarian, starting with every member of this Legislature, to engage in daily physical activities that suit your physical abilities; eat a healthy diet rich in fruit and vegetables; reduce the daily amount of sodium, sugar and fat consumed; avoid tobacco use and second-hand smoke; get to, and maintain, a healthy weight; and manage stress levels effectively.

Healthy eating, physical activity and not smoking are priorities for the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport, which has a number of initiatives aimed at preventing obesity and disease and empowering Ontarians to develop healthy habits, including:

- our smoke-free Ontario legislation, including the recent ban on the sale and distribution of flavoured cigars;

- the healthy communities fund, which supports local groups with community-based programming that promotes physical activity, healthy eating, smoking cessation, addiction prevention and mental health;

- Ontario's after-school program, which provides supervised programming for children and youth in priority communities from 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. on physical activity, nutrition and wellness; and

- our EatRight Ontario program, a free service providing nutrition and healthy eating advice from registered dietitians online or by telephone in more than 110 languages.

However, the government of Ontario cannot do this work alone. We all have a part to play in it. The ministry works closely with a wide variety of partners, including Ontario's public health units, schools and community centres, as well as non-governmental organizations such

as the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, whose research and advocacy to prevent cardiovascular disease and stroke is commendable.

Our government continues our work in raising awareness, educating Ontarians and providing healthy environments, which are crucial to good health. As I've often said, your health is your wealth. It is indeed your most important asset, and I say that to these young people who are in the Legislature with us as pages. Invest in it. For those of you who are able: walk, ride, run, get physical; and for persons who are living with a disability: engage in daily activities which suit your abilities.

The quality and the length of life depends on a healthy heart. Remember that your heart is for life. And do not forget to eat healthy, local Ontario foods and to eat right, Ontario.

1330

NATIONAL BIOTECHNOLOGY WEEK

SEMAINE NATIONALE DES BIOTECHNOLOGIES

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is an important week for Ontario as we recognize National Biotechnology Week.

Le secteur ontarien des sciences de la vie, qui comprend les biotechnologies, emploie au-delà de 43 000 personnes qui travaillent auprès de quelque 850 entreprises, lesquelles génèrent 14 milliards de dollars de recettes chaque année.

Les biotechnologies ont le potentiel d'offrir des solutions à un grand nombre des défis que nous devons relever ici en Ontario et ailleurs dans le monde.

L'Ontario est déjà la plus imposante plaque tournante des activités biomédicales au Canada et la troisième en importance en Amérique du Nord.

Ce secteur est vigoureux et croissant, et notre nouvelle stratégie de commercialisation des sciences de la vie contribuera à faire en sorte qu'un nombre encore plus élevé de technologies biomédicales de pointe soient découvertes en Ontario et fabriquées ici aux fins de vente à l'échelle du globe.

We're leading the world in areas like stem cell research, working with other leading jurisdictions like California and Japan to push the boundaries of human knowledge. The research that we are fostering here in Ontario right now holds the promise of revolutionizing treatments for illnesses like cancer, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, traumatic injuries and heart disease.

It holds the promise of creating solutions to the global problem of climate change by revolutionizing the way we build and power our vehicles. Research is going on across our province to find new ways of using crops to build lighter, stronger and greener auto parts. And at Ontario universities, researchers are working on the next generation of biofuels that use agricultural by-products like corn husks.

In Ontario, we see global challenges as opportunities to change the world, to work together and to bring our

talent, commitment and imagination to bear in delivering bio-based products, services and the jobs of the future.

We have a vibrant biotech industry where multi-nationals and homegrown companies have proven themselves true leaders in innovation. But for all our strengths in biotechnology, for all our achievements and discoveries, it would be a mistake to rest on our laurels even for a moment. Increased global competition means that for Ontario to shine, we need to continue attracting and retaining the best scientific minds. We need to create the conditions for new ideas to flourish; for better collaboration among academics, industry and government; and for easier access to capital, especially in the earliest stages of the business.

C'est pourquoi notre stratégie de commercialisation des sciences de la vie comprend un fonds de 7 millions de dollars à l'appui des sociétés biotechnologiques qui insiste sur la mise au point des produits aux premières étapes du processus.

Nous comprenons l'importance non seulement de faire de l'innovation un pan de notre culture, mais également de montrer au monde entier que l'Ontario est un leader en biotechnologies. Voilà pourquoi nous soulignons et nous célébrons l'innovation ontarienne durant la Semaine nationale des biotechnologies.

That's why the McGuinty government is investing in research and innovation that will help deliver better health care, cleaner energy, and more sustainable and affordable ways of living and working. That's really what our \$161-million life science commercialization strategy is all about: positioning Ontario as one of the best provinces in the world for scientists to come to to research, to collaborate and to innovate.

We know that the new clean technology products and services that we develop and sell will not only create good Ontario jobs for our families, but a cleaner and better planet for all. I want to thank my colleagues in the Legislature for supposing these programs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Responses?

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

M. Peter Shurman: À titre de porte-parole de l'opposition pour les affaires francophones, je suis heureux de commémorer aujourd'hui le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes qui aura lieu le samedi 25 septembre. Ceci est la première fois que nous reconnaissons officiellement ce jour depuis que le projet de loi 24 fut adopté au mois d'avril.

Depuis les 35 dernières années, le 25 septembre a toujours été un jour très significatif pour la communauté francophone. Le 25 septembre 1975, le drapeau francophone vert et blanc a été levé pour la première fois à l'Université de Sudbury. Le drapeau fut adopté par l'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario en 1977.

Donc, le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes nous donne l'occasion de reconnaître le rôle

spécial qu'occupe la communauté francophone dans l'histoire de notre province. La présence francophone en Ontario date depuis 400 ans. Ils sont parmi les premiers peuples fondateurs de notre merveilleuse nation.

Pour la majorité du 20^e siècle et au-delà, le Parti PC a contribué à la promotion et à la conservation de l'aspect unique que tient cette communauté en Ontario. Le dynamisme de la communauté francophone que nous voyons aujourd'hui confirme que la langue et la culture françaises demeurent une partie intégrante et fondamentale de la société ontarienne.

Bonne journée des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes.

NATIONAL BIOTECHNOLOGY WEEK

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'd like to continue by responding to the Minister of Research and Innovation. In the compendium, there's a paragraph that says that a major contributor to Ontario's thriving life sciences sector, biotechnology, is immensely important to our economy and our province. Ontario's life sciences sector employs about 43,000 people at some 850 companies, generating about \$14 billion in revenues annually. That's pretty good.

However, do you know how much better we could do if we understood what we are doing with venture capital that is not flowing into the province of Ontario? And this, in my response to the minister, is what I would like to highlight. The Ontario venture capital fund was set up to bring money into the province of Ontario. There is \$150 million allocated in the budgetary plans of the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty, and there's no take-up whatsoever. Why would that be? The answer is simple: Because nobody is interested, in these days, in taking advantage of Ontario as a location in that area, at least by way of expansion, when you've got a 10% tax credit and next door, in the province of Quebec, the tax credit is 36%. If you want a vibrant sector in biotechnology, that's what you're looking for; you're looking for people who come in and make a legitimate investment in something that deserves legitimate investment and that's getting it in provinces other than Ontario.

So before you take credit, Minister, for what's going on in Ontario, look beyond your own backyard.

WORLD HEART DAY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to respond, on behalf of the PC caucus, to the minister's comments on World Heart Day and to acknowledge this milestone occasion. This Sunday, the World Heart Federation and its members will be celebrating the 10-year anniversary of the occasion.

In recognition of this milestone, the World Heart Foundation is encouraging governments, health care professionals, employers and individuals to work towards reducing the burden of heart disease and stroke. This year, the focus of World Heart Day is the role of the

workplace in the promotion of heart-healthy messages. The federation aims to encourage workplaces to promote healthy attitudes and working environments, which will, in turn, benefit employers in terms of productivity, attendance and the general well-being of their employees.

The World Health Organization reports that cardiovascular diseases are the world's largest killers, claiming 17 million lives a year. Risk factors for heart disease and stroke include high blood pressure, high cholesterol and blood glucose levels, smoking, poor nutrition, inadequate physical activity and obesity. World Heart Day will help to build awareness of these risk factors and the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

In closing, I would like to thank the World Heart Federation, the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the many other organizations who have dedicated their time to doing this important work.

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Given that we only have five minutes to respond, I'm only going to be responding to the first two. So here I go.

Il n'y aura pas un endroit en Ontario où la vitalité franco-ontarienne sera plus évidente ou la culture franco-ontarienne sera plus vibrante qu'à Sudbury ce samedi le 25 septembre en l'honneur de la première journée franco-ontarienne.

1340

C'est également plusieurs honneurs que nous allons célébrer à Sudbury, en commençant avec le 35^e anniversaire du drapeau franco-ontarien, qui a été conçu à Sudbury. Le drapeau original, je l'ai vu plusieurs fois. J'ai vu les gens qui l'ont créé. Ce n'était pas des couturiers de haute couture, mais il est quand même très beau et ça vaut la peine de venir à Sudbury pour le voir. Il sera hissé au mât de l'Université de Sudbury à 15h30 samedi après-midi. Venez voir ça. C'est une superbe, belle célébration qu'ils ont organisée. Ça va valoir la peine. Je vous garantis que vous allez être fier des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes.

Mais ce n'est pas tout. Le 25 septembre sera également l'occasion de plusieurs célébrations.

On commence en soulignant le 100^e anniversaire de l'ACFO du grand Sudbury.

Le Carrefour francophone, qui était connu sous le nom de Centre des jeunes, célèbre son 60^e anniversaire. J'ai travaillé là pendant un an et demi.

L'Université Laurentienne célèbre son 50^e anniversaire.

Le Club Richelieu—on en a plusieurs à Sudbury, donc c'est le Club Richelieu Les Patriotes—célèbre son 25^e.

Le Collège Boréal, notre collège francophone, célèbre son 15^e.

La Galerie du Nouvel-Ontario, une superbe galerie progressive qui me fait toujours penser à mon bon ami Michel Galipeau, célèbre son 15^e anniversaire.

Le Centre Victoria pour femmes, un autre organisme pour et par les francophones, célèbre son 15^e anniversaire. Salut, madame Christine Caldwell, qui siège à leur conseil d'administration.

Donc, on aura un gala des anniversaires. Si vous voulez ressentir ce que c'est que la francophonie en Ontario, vous devez venir à Sudbury.

Et si vous pensez que parfois c'est très bruyant à l'Assemblée, c'est parce que vous n'avez jamais assisté à un tintamarre. Quand l'École secondaire catholique Champlain dans mon comté décide d'organiser un tintamarre, ils n'y vont pas avec le dos de la cuillère. C'est tellement bruyant que tu ne peux plus t'entendre penser. Je félicite M^{me} Lyse-Anne Papineau, qui est la directrice du Conseil scolaire catholique du Nouvel-Ontario, qui amène des étudiants de plusieurs écoles qui viennent participer au tintamarre. C'est vraiment une occasion pour eux de démontrer leur fierté.

Mais là, je manque de temps, so I'm going to go right into World Heart Day, because I'm running out of time.

WORLD HEART DAY

M^{me} France Gélinas: We all know that World Heart Day brings attention to how to make healthy decisions for heart health. World Heart Day brings attention to the fact that heart disease and stroke are the world's leading causes of death but that 80% of those premature deaths from heart disease and stroke could be avoided if we could only tackle the four main risk factors: use of tobacco, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, and unhealthy weight. Too many lives are cut short—and quite often, quite suddenly—with tremendous hardship for the families, friends and loved ones. All of this could change with the right health promotion initiative.

We in this Legislature have the responsibility to do everything in our power to assist people to make healthy decisions. It is the right thing to do. It makes sense in terms of lessening personal tragedy. It makes sense in terms of saving precious health care dollars.

In Ontario today, we are facing an obesity epidemic. This will put a huge strain on our health care system. I introduced a private member's bill, Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating. It wouldn't cost the taxpayers of Ontario anything. It would mandate that big restaurant chains post the calorie labelling of the food they serve, either on their menu or menu board. It is not a state-of-the-art idea; it was when it was first introduced, but now it is the law across the States. Here again, an opportunity to make people healthier is not acted upon. I ask the Minister of Health Promotion to run with it. We need this in Ontario.

PETITIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, hereby respectfully request the Ontario Legislative Assembly, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ontario disability support program and/or Ontario Works, as well as any and all associated groups, organizations and/or individuals, to reinstate the special diet allowance, effective immediately.

"The special diet allowance is used to enable us to buy the foods we are required to have in order to achieve optimum health. At present, the majority of us that must exist on the Ontario disability support program and/or Ontario Works regular monthly benefits cannot afford the fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, fish, milk or even particular required supplements on an ongoing, consistent basis without this special diet allowance.

"We also respectfully request at this time that the Ontario Legislative Assembly, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ontario disability support program and/or Ontario Works' regular monthly benefit rates be raised to reflect the true cost of living and be increased accordingly on an annual basis so that we are able to maintain optimum health and afford the necessities of life that our conditions require."

It is signed by many residents, mostly from the city of Cambridge, and I affix my signature thereto.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank the corporation of the town of New Tecumseth council for composing this petition and for circulating it.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of the province of Ontario has entered into an agreement with the government of Canada to implement the harmonized goods and services tax; and

"Whereas the majority of Ontario taxpayers are opposed to the implementation of this tax; and

"Whereas the HST will add 8% to many goods and services where currently only the 5% GST is charged and will result in increased costs for all Ontarians and may create financial hardship for lower-income families and individuals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government rescind its decision to implement the HST in Ontario."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm reading a petition supporting extending the Ombudsman of Ontario's jurisdiction to include the Tarion Warranty Corp.

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air

conditioning (HVAC) systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations etc.;

"Whereas, often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Tarion Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Tarion Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Tarion agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Tarion and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

I couldn't agree more, and I'm going to sign this and give it to Thomas to be delivered.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Frank Klees: I have literally hundreds of signatures on a petition delivered to me by Mr. Douglas G. Brown, and it reads as follows:

"A petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ... recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal

shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

1350

I'm pleased to affix my signature and thank all of those who supported this petition.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Nickel Belt, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients....; and

“Whereas,” since “October 2009, insured PET scans” have been “performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the clerks with page Brandon.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to be able to introduce a petition on behalf of my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora.

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly

defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I agree with this and I will affix my signature supporting MPP Frank Klees and provide this to Caelan.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

“Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

“Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 70;

“Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment in 2007 to provide a 2% base funding increase to agencies providing developmental services every year up to 2010-11;

“Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

“Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to service providers in the developmental services sector.”

It is signed by many people in the Hamilton, Grimsby and Ancaster area. I am in agreement and will sign this petition and send it with page Rodney.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that actually comes from all over Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers' laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed these laws; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers' legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

“Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Christopher.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the undersigned, are devastated to learn of the provincial government's decision, as part of the 2010 provincial budget, to terminate the special diet allowance and replace it with a new program under the Ministry of Health;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that, through the transition to the new special diet program, the provincial government ensures no disruption to the income to anyone receiving the current special diet allowance. Moreover, we ask that the new criteria for eligibility for the new program is transparent, fair and that it serves to support low-income Ontarians in the pursuit of better health. Please consider this request."

I'm in agreement and will sign my name to it and send it with page Thomas.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

CONDOMINIUM OWNERS PROTECTION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PROPRIÉTAIRES DE CONDOMINIUMS

Mr. Marchese moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 79, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to condominiums / Projet de loi 79, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait aux condominiums.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Marchese, pursuant to standing order 98, you have up to 12 minutes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Before I start debating the bill, I want to thank the 50 or so condominium owners who have come to witness the debate. They are from different parts of the city and beyond. In fact, one of them is from Guelph; I'm going to mention him in a second.

I want to say that I have tried to deal with condominium issues for the last three years. I have introduced two bills in the past, and this is the third. My other two bills were supported by enough members of the Liberal Party and enough members of the Conservative

Party, and with the great support of New Democrats we were able to pass them through and send them to a legislative committee. The problem is, once they get to a legislative committee, they have a tendency to die there if the Liberal majority doesn't want those bills to be dealt with.

I'm hoping that Bill 79 will pass today, and I am hoping that once it gets sent to a legislative committee, it will be supported this time, this year, by the government because, in my view and in the view of many condominium owners, the time has come to change the Condominium Act.

The Condominium Act is one thick document. I suspect that the majority of condominium owners have never seen it and never read it, nor do they necessarily want to read it, because much of it is written by lawyers and much of it is complicated, similar to so many declarations and contracts that condominium owners have to involve themselves with at the time of purchase. They're very complex, and the majority of condo owners never read those declarations, which leads to problems. But the majority of them really can't afford to pay condominium lawyers to do that work, because condos are already expensive, and if you want a good condo lawyer, it costs anywhere from 3,000 to 5,000 bucks. That's an added cost, and many of them probably avoid that cost, which is unfortunate, because then, many of them find themselves with a lot of secret clauses that they never imagined, which bring on additional costs that they never imagined. And that's part of the ongoing problem.

1400

We have close to one million people who live in condominiums in the province of Ontario, and half of them live in Toronto. The last time we changed this act was in 1998. The first one was in 1978, the second in 1998. Since then, we have seen an explosion of condominium growth and a whole lot of people living in condominiums. They, in effect, have replaced rental buildings.

I believe the government has not kept up with those growing changes. We have seen tremendous problems, and the government, in my view, has refused to open up the act and allow condominium owners an opportunity to respond to changes that they believe ought to happen in order for them to have the protections they're desperately looking for.

I think it's just a question of time until the minister and this government decide to make changes. I say to the Liberal members and some ministers who are here, you don't have to accept my bill. You can bring your own bill. Bring your own condo changes, but give condominium owners an opportunity to respond to it so that they can have a voice in the changes that they're calling for, that I've been calling for, for the last three years.

At the moment, if a condo owner has a problem with a developer, where do they go? If a condo owner has a problem with a property manager, where do they go? If a condo owner has a problem with a board, who do they turn to for help? There is no one to turn to for help. The

only support that the condo act gives people is your right to go in front of an arbitration panel, an arbitration group that does mediation. But that's costly. You're going to lawyers, in effect, to solve a problem.

The majority of condo owners are just modest-income people. They don't have the money, the resources, the time or the skills to take on a developer or a property manager or board—they do not. The only recourse is arbitration, mediation and, from there, the court system; and all of it means big bucks to have to defend yourself. It's just not right. It isn't right that they do not have a place to go to solve a problem that doesn't cost, and should not cost, so much.

We have a tribunal system for renters, and there are 3.3 million people who live in rental buildings. There's a tribunal; it costs money. It costs Ontario citizens \$27 million to run that tribunal. They raise \$10 million from service fees. I find it sad that a tenant has to pay a fee to defend himself or herself against a landlord. I find it sad, but they do raise \$10 million from fees.

We need a tribunal-like place for people to go that is affordable. My bill proposes to create a review board that has the power to appoint review officers, who would be lawyers, to solve disputes between a condo owner and a developer, a condo owner and board, a condo owner and a property manager. It should be an easy process and it should be affordable.

I've got to tell you, people I spoke to said that recommendation was made in 1978, and it was rejected by the lawyers and by the developers in 1978. The Conservative government at the time obviously caved in to the developers and we didn't get a tribunal that I believe condominium owners need today.

I've got to say, I've had a lot of support from Conservative members over the last couple of years, so it's not an attack on them at all. I'm just giving an historical picture of what happened in 1978. I think it's time to have a tribunal-like system so that people can go to a lawyer, state the case, the lawyer solves it and we're done. That's the way it should be. That is the main component of my bill.

The other component of that particular bill, which I introduced three years ago, was that we should have good-faith language. It's a bill that's coming up when we talk about the franchise act. In the franchisor act, there is good-faith language that binds a franchisor to keep his or her word as they sell a franchise to somebody. We don't have that in the Condominium Act, and we need that language. Why? Because many developers say one thing at the point of sale and do another once you get into your condo building. We need to correct that. We need to be able to keep a developer to his or her word. If they say there's going to be a pool, there should be a pool, and if they say there's not going to be a pool, there should be no pool that the condominium owners have to pay for down the line. So we need good-faith language.

We also need other changes. Tarion is the entity that provides the warranties when the workmanship of a developer is shoddy. What condominium owners tell us

is that Tarion does not represent homeowners or condominium owners; rather, from what they tell me, it supports the developer. It's got to change. It shouldn't be that way. It's a warranty program.

A Tarion board that provides warranties for shoddy workmanship should be representing condo owners and homeowners. But once you join that board, if you're a consumer advocate, you have to leave that behind. You cannot advocate for consumers; you can't advocate for condo owners or homeowners. You've got to advocate on behalf of the board, and the board said, "You are not an advocate of homeowners and condo owners." It's just wrong. That's got to change.

My bill addresses that in two ways. It says they should respond promptly and the board should be representative of consumers. Half of the board members will have an advocacy role, a consumer role, and two of those members will come from condominiums and homeowners so that their voices are heard in Tarion. I think it's a modest proposal, and it's a reasonable one.

I should tell you my bill says that if a factory is converted into a condominium, it should be covered by a warranty. At the moment, it's not. I remember the then minister, the now minister without portfolio, saying he would refer it to the head of Tarion three years ago. He referred the matter to Tarion. Tarion said, "No, we've got other issues to deal with." So buildings that convert into condominiums have no warranty program. It just doesn't make any sense. Why wouldn't they be covered by a warranty?

The minister without portfolio should be able to speak up against these things. He should have called the head of Tarion and said, "No, you've got to get them covered." But three years have passed and there's no coverage.

We need changes. There are horror stories. A condo owner from Guelph who is here today told me he spent \$40,000 to sue a developer over a badly constructed basement. A 70-year-old woman from Richmond Hill called us because her property manager is threatening to sell her unit for no reason. A downtown woman who is here today got injured in her elevator and was forced to pay \$1,800 to get the same elevator professionally inspected. She has to pay for that. It's just nuts; it's wrong.

We need to change the condo act in order to give condo owners the protections they need. They need rights. They need protection. At the moment, the condo act does not give it to them. I am hoping that this year the Liberal members will listen to us, the minister will listen to us and the Premier will listen to the changes that I am proposing.

Thank you for coming to listen to this debate.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. Order, please, in the galleries. I'd just remind members of the public in the galleries that while we welcome you here at Queen's Park to watch the debate, you're not in any way allowed to participate in the debate, and that includes clapping. Thank you very much.

Further debate?

1410

Mr. Mario Sergio: It's always a privilege and an honour to rise in the House and address issues that pertain to our common taxpayers, especially on this particular bill brought forward by the member from Trinity-Spadina. Although the number is different and the content of the bill is different, it's getting closer. We're coming down from Bill 186 to 79, so it looks good for Mr. Marchese. I have to say that he's very persistent and very persuasive.

We should be looking at this bill as the initial document to stir up a debate that I believe is much needed with respect to the Condominium Act, condominium owners, developers, Tarion and a slew of other things as well. I hope that Mr. Marchese's bill will go forward. I would like to see this bill go to a committee, where we can have public hearings, where we can indeed hear from the various stakeholders, and hear more than what we are saying in the House today.

I myself have a lot of condominiums in my area, and I could tell the House a number of horror stories as well. While the bill may be far from being perfect, I think we should be using it as a way of initiating a debate, and I do hope that it will move it on to hearing the various stakeholders who have an interest in this. Also, as a government, we should have an interest in this as well, because in the end we are dealing with our own people. We need to protect our people.

The bill calls for a number of things. Some of them I feel are necessary, some I think we should have a second look at, but, as I said, we do need to have a look at how the various condominium laws are governing our owners in Ontario.

Yes, there is a problem with Tarion; yes, there is a problem with the Building Code; yes, there is a problem with developers; yes, there is a problem with owners wanting to purchase that first condominium unit. Often, they are not fully aware of what to expect. Once they are about to close, if they are saying, "Well, the unit does not have a sink. I can't move, I cannot close," believe it or not, the agreement of purchase and sale says that it is sufficiently completed for you to close and occupy that unit—and there is no recourse, because if you don't close you forfeit the deposit, and then you are out of luck. There are no ifs or buts.

In the month of October, I had a senior couple who had no hot water tank. They had no hot water and no heat. They were forced to move into the unit. Otherwise, they would be losing not only the deposit; they would be losing the unit. They had sold their own house; they were scaling down. They were put in a position where they were forced to close. I have to say, there wasn't any recourse for those particular people.

The member is bringing forth a private member's bill that I think deserves at least to move forward and hear more from the various—even from the industries, the owners, the corporations, the maintenance and the management people. I think there are a slew of people who have a stake in this.

Some of the things, frankly, that the bill is saying—I don't know if they could be done. How are we going to do it? Sure, the board has a lot to do, with respect to the management and how the condominium is moving along. Creating another board: Is this good or bad? Are we creating another layer? We have problems now between management, owners, condominium corporations and the board as well. I think that there is a huge problem there. How are we going to fix that? I think this would come out if we had some consultation and some public hearings.

The building code: Yes, some changes are needed there, but are we going to do it this particular way? There is an existing Ontario building code, and I think it should be enforced.

When it comes to noise, is that the proper way of doing it? We have the local municipalities that should be the first ones to respond, to be approached and to solve the problem. But seeing that the time—it is unfair to us, and we have to be caught at a very particular time.

I just would like to say, yes, it is not everything that we all would like to see, but at least the bill is an initial step to move forward and see where we go from here. I hope that we can improve it and satisfy the requirements that Mr. Marchese has brought forth. I think it's important that we do look at it and bring in necessary changes for the benefit of present and future condominium owners.

I will leave some time for my colleague. I thank the member for bringing the bill forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly pleased to join the debate on Bill 79, the Condominium Owners Protection Act, 2010, that has been put forward by the member for Trinity-Spadina.

I want to commend the efforts of the honourable member from Trinity-Spadina. I know that he, as an individual who represents a very highly concentrated and densely populated urban riding, is very familiar with the concerns of condominium owners, and so I applaud him for bringing it forward.

The first Condominium Act was passed in 1998 and came into effect in 2001. Obviously, since that time, we have seen a tremendous growth in condominium development, and it's certainly now time to address some of the issues that have been brought forward.

I also live in an urban riding, and I am seeing an increasing amount of condominium development. Of course, as a result I have more condominium owners, and I also tend to hear from those individuals about concerns that they have.

This bill, if it's passed today, will give us an opportunity to review at committee the concerns that have been raised throughout the province of Ontario and to seek solutions to those problems.

I think it's important to remember that condominium owners are, in fact, property owners. Although they don't own the property, it's really important that we ensure that

their rights and their interests are protected. So we are taking, I believe, a step in the right direction by reviewing what is happening currently.

We do know that condominiums, because they're different than apartments and because they're different than homes, do have their own very unique set of challenges, by virtue of the fact that each unit is individually owned, with the board of directors essentially governing the building as a whole, while a separate, third party property maintenance company is responsible for upkeep and repairs. You can sometimes find yourself in a very complex situation and one that is rather difficult to navigate.

It seems that often today we find that there are owners of condominiums who do not have the necessary protections and do not have the recourse to resolve the problems they are encountering. As a result, they become the victim.

I think if we take a look at this bill, it's going to strengthen the standing of condo owners. Therefore, it's going to provide them with some relief from the complex, varied and more and more problems that we're hearing about today.

Condominium development and ownership have become integral elements to the economy of many of our urban centres in Ontario. They do serve, I believe, a very useful purpose. I think if you take a look, a lot of the condominiums do go up at a time when we're trying to reduce our carbon footprint and decrease sprawl. We have to make sure that, obviously, people who are going to be buying the condominiums and people who are going to be building the condominiums—that we have the incentives, the proper structures in place in order to provide protection for everybody. So I think this bill is a step in the right direction. It's going to ensure that there are structures and there are safeguards to guarantee that the rights of everybody are protected and that people receive value for their money.

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We do know—and I take a look at some of the points that have been made by the member from Trinity–Spadina—that some of the concerns we hear about are shoddy workmanship, unfinished lobbies, units that look different than they were thought to be, or lack of soundproofing. Also, there are governance issues today, and that's a very serious issue as well. And of course, at the end of the day, I think it's this utter lack of recourse when you have disputes between owners, boards, property managers or developers. Currently, people are going to court to try to resolve that.

If you take a look at the support for the bill, I think there are several condominium owners' associations that appear very supportive. So we do have a duty to review the situation and try to rectify it. This bill is a first step in the direction. Purchasers have the right to receive what they paid for. Buying a condo only to learn later that it's different from what you expected is just not acceptable.

Hopefully, this bill will take us forward to a point where we can ensure that the problems that are being

encountered today will be addressed. Obviously, there are sections within this bill that I may or may not agree with, but on the whole, I do support this piece of legislation, I commend the member and I will be supporting it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It is indeed a privilege and an honour to stand here and support my colleague from Trinity–Spadina as he, for the third time, tries to get this bill passed.

When a good idea comes along in this Legislature, it may be embraced, but then nothing happens with it. We may all stand up and talk about what is contained within the body of the bill and how we want it to move forward, but it seems that it never does.

I want to commend Mr. Marchese, the member from Trinity–Spadina, because he has not given up hope. He continues to fight this battle, not once, not twice, but three times. I'm hoping the third time is lucky, because what he is trying to do is very simple in legislation.

I only want to talk about three small aspects of the bill and leave additional time for my colleague to talk about it. The first one is the whole question of Tarion. That is a board and a body that is run by developers for developers in order to make sure that developers get what they want and that they are protected when people are angry at the shoddy work or service they have delivered. Over the years of my time in this Legislature, we have tried to deal with so many people who have shoddily built homes, shoddily built condominiums, shoddily built everything, and the developers, through Tarion, are able to skirt around the issues, to not have to pay, to not have to repair, to do whatever they end up doing.

When I've talked with officials from Tarion, they shrug their shoulders and say, "This is the way it is; this is the way it should be; buyer beware." They give me all this stuff.

But I want to tell you that that will all end in a minute if this bill is passed. When half of the people on the Tarion board are consumers, homeowners, condominium owners—when half of them are there—they will understand and they will not let this happen. So I think the first thing that has to happen here is that half of the board of Tarion needs to be consumers and consumer advocates; they don't need any longer to be developers and developers' representatives alone. I think a half-and-half mixture, which has been put down here, will do wonders in getting shoddily built homes and condominiums repaired and give equal voice to consumers and those who produce the product.

The second thing I want to talk about is the whole issue of conversion condominiums and lofts. Being a representative from Toronto, we see many older buildings being converted to lofts, and we think that's a good thing. We think that repairing and restoring historical buildings and making neighbourhoods remain roughly the same and bringing life to downtown factory areas that are no longer any good for manufacturing is a wonderful thing. It's far better, in our view, to repair those old

factories, those old storage facilities, those old office buildings that no longer meet the 21st-century standard; to repair them for good, decent homes and loft homes.

Certainly I know that in Toronto when loft homes are sold, they sell out rapidly. People want to live in them. People want the high ceilings. People want to have bedrooms on a mezzanine level. They want the convenience of living in the downtown core. But these conversion condos have not been included in warranties and they need to be, so that people are protected the same as if you start at ground level and build up. They need to be protected in exactly the same way. So I commend my colleague from Trinity-Spadina for including this, too, in his bill.

Last but not least, I want to talk about the provision in his bill that allows for a condo review board. We live in a litigious society—not so litigious as the United States, thank God, but litigious enough—where, when people are unhappy, they are forced to go to courts. This is a time-consuming expense. This is something that ought not to be meted out to individual condominium owners. Why should people be forced to go to court? Why should they be forced to hire lawyers over grievances that should ordinarily be resolved in a civilized way? Having boards instead of courts is a good thing. Having an opportunity to sit there and have an arbitrated settlement without having a forced, legal protracted manoeuvre is a good thing.

I want to say that I will be supporting in its entirety that which has been put forward by the member from Trinity-Spadina. I'm asking the members, particularly on the government benches opposite, to support this bill, but to support it in whole: to support it and to talk in caucus about making sure it goes to committee, making sure that that committee has an opportunity to listen to people as they come forward, to absorb and do everything that is necessary from what they state to make this into law, and then to argue in your caucus to bring it forward for third reading.

If you have a better idea, then come out with a government bill. I'm sure that if it's better, I'll support it instead. In the meantime, after three years, this is the best we've had. This is the best hope we have to help those Ontarians who now live in condominiums and to do the right thing by people who are trying to protect their biggest, their best and their most important investment, which is their homes.

Congratulations to the member from Trinity-Spadina.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: I want to compliment the member from Trinity-Spadina for bringing this legislation through. I see much in it that warrants my support, and in fact I will be supporting this bill. I say that for a couple of reasons.

In my riding of Willowdale, I have a huge amount of experience with condominium issues. I'm in my riding every Friday at my constituency office when the House is sitting, and more days than that when it's not sitting, and

every one of those days I have several appointments dealing with condominium issues in Willowdale. Willowdale, by most estimations, has more condominiums in it per capita than any place else in Canada. I hear a lot about the issues that this bill is going to address. I could speak at length about it, but I want to speak to one section in particular that I think deserves great credit and I know has struck a real chord with my constituents in Willowdale.

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One of the things that I hear about in those many, many constituency meetings is this issue: A dispute of some sort has arisen in the condominium. It may be a dispute between the condominium owner and the condominium corporation; it may be a dispute between two condominium owners. There are various combinations of these disputes that arise in the condominium.

To date, for the most part, these disputes often—more often than not—get out of control and become intractable, and when they become intractable, they become bitter disputes between residents, owners in the condominium, between the condominium owner and the condominium corporation, and all the other various combinations.

Then the parties get involved with trying to resolve the dispute and inevitably they get the advice: “Well, it's a condominium. It's a very complicated area and you need to see a lawyer. You've got to go into the judicial process and get this sorted out somehow.” The cost of doing that is just prohibitive. It just gets way out of whack.

This bill—and I'm just going to quote from the preamble of the bill—sets out something called a review board. I'll just quote what the intention of the review board is:

“The review board's objects include advising the public on matters relating to condominiums, providing information to condominium corporations and owners of condominium units on matters of concern to them and”—I think the real benefit of this legislation—“assisting in the resolution of disputes, including disputes involving,” and then it lists types of disputes.

I think that if this legislation passes, this mechanism, this vehicle to resolve these disputes by way of a review board—and that might be by way of arbitration, mediation and so forth—is going to go a huge way to alleviate and resolve the anxieties that the condominium owners—and the condominium corporations board, because they're in this dispute also. At the end of the day, a resolution to the satisfaction of all parties is the best thing for everybody: the condo owner, the condo corporation, the individual directors and what have you.

Further, to assist the work of the review board there has to be a mechanism to mediate, to arbitrate, to get the parties to these intractable disputes together and to get them talking, to keep them out of the litigation system, to keep them out of the lawyers' offices, to save money that they can use for their otherwise monthly living expenses.

The legislation contemplates something called review officers, and they will be set up by the review board:

"The review board shall appoint review officers who shall perform the duties and exercise the powers given to them by this act and the regulations under the supervision of the review board and shall perform such other duties as are assigned to them by the review board."

As I understand the legislation, there is the review board to resolve, as I've said for about the third time, these otherwise intractable disputes. It goes a step farther and it provides personnel—man persons, woman persons—to assist in the resolution of those disputes. That's a good thing for all concerned in the condominium world. It's a good thing for the constituents of Willowdale. It's a good thing for the constituents anywhere in Ontario who are in a condominium lifestyle situation.

There is one last point here that I think is very helpful. The act contemplates an annual report. So the review board every year is going to do a report on what the review board has dealt with that year—disputes that have come in the door, disputes that have been resolved; it will keep statistics on various issues in condominium corporations. That report will be filed with the Lieutenant Governor. Why is that important? Because that will give us in this Legislature an insight into what the review board and the review officers are seeing in the condominium world and we can constantly monitor it and, from time to time, we may want to refresh the legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to be able to speak to Bill 79 in support of my colleague from Trinity-Spadina, Rosario Marchese. I appreciate the opportunity because he has brought this bill forward a number of times—three, in fact—and he has received, on all those occasions, support from our party, the Progressive Conservative Party, and in particular from our critic for consumer services, Julia Munro.

I'd also like to welcome the people in the gallery today who've taken the time to come to Queen's Park to witness this debate because this issue is important to them and other property owners right across the province. Thank you all very much for coming here. I think you're probably pleasantly surprised to see that all three political parties here today have taken your concerns into consideration. They will be supporting this piece of legislation to see it move forward so that we can best protect your property rights, your pocketbooks and your way of life.

We recognize that many condo owners have concerns about how the current Condominium Act works—or doesn't work. Certainly, in the Progressive Conservative Party, we'd like to see reforms made, and that is why we will be supporting Mr. Marchese's bill.

We'd also like to see reforms that would enhance the rights of property owners. Where I come from, there are not a whole lot of condominiums. I live in a suburban-rural riding, so I probably have a few more farms than I do condominiums. But my husband and I, as we started out on our married life 10 years ago—our first place was a condominium. It can be one of the best things in the

world, or it can also be something that's quite difficult. It's always great to have great neighbours, but it's also important to have good property management. I think that's why it's important that this act is passed.

Mr. Marchese has been very upfront that he'd like to rectify a number of challenges that condo owners across Ontario are facing. The first one is clearly some structural problems, like shoddy workmanship. I don't think in this day and age we should be tolerating people doing work and not finishing it. When you're looking at unfinished lobbies, units that are smaller or very different from what the owners thought they were getting or the lack of soundproofing, we think that needs to be rectified. I think this bill is setting out to do that, to give you the protections that you deserve.

It's also very difficult in this day and age when you look at condo owners right now, one of the hardest-hit groups when you think of the HST. Even if you are taking that on yourselves, you're hit with two problems. One is, you're either going to have to fix it yourself and you're paying the HST, or you're going to have to get somebody who is doing it under the table, and you may not get the guarantees; the second thing is, you're paying this increased price because of the HST on many of these issues, and in many of the cases you're finding that some of this work isn't getting done. So it's a very important issue.

The other issue that I think Mr. Marchese wants to correct, and we certainly support, is bad governance, whether that's the misuse of proxy votes, whether that's intimidating owners who try to organize residents or whether that's expensive alterations that are carried out with or without owner approval. The reality is, we need to strengthen and reform board governance. I think that many of the parties here have spoken to that today.

Finally, I think he seeks to alleviate disputes between owners, boards, property management or developers. He really feels, as we all do, that this can only be solved in the courts presently. That's really no way that Ontarians would like to be spending their time and/or their money. I think there's a better way, and for this review mechanism he's certainly setting out to achieve better decision-making, maintenance and interactions.

I'd like to point out that other than those in the gallery today, who have come—I believe they've travelled from either Mississauga or Brampton, Mr. Marchese?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Different places.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Different places—there are many different stakeholders who have spoken out in support of this type of a bill. I want to preface the condo owners association of Ontario, who we worked with in my office with respect to the HST. They are very much in support of Mr. Marchese's bill. The Canadian Alliance for Condominium Owners' Rights has also spoken out. They state that because of the government's failure or refusal to address the protection interests of condo unit owners, this type of bill is needed. The Condo Information Centre also recognized five sources of problems. One is the lack of government regulation and enforcement over the

condo industry in general, and lack of enforcement of the condo act.

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You see here that there are people throughout the province who are supportive of this piece of legislation. We have heard from colleagues from all three political parties who are speaking of the need for change and progress. We have heard from those who have taken the time to join us in the gallery today that enough isn't enough. We must continue to make progress, continue to work in the right direction to ensure that there is access to information, access to assistance and access to an appropriate appeal board. That's why we'll certainly continue to support Mr. Marchese's bill, and that is why not only will we vote for it today but we will look forward to this bill coming back to this chamber for third reading and voting for it again then.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to rise to this. And thank you for coming down, all of those who have.

Something to add to the debate: Of course, I'm going to be supporting the member from Trinity-Spadina on this bill. It should have been passed six years ago. We shouldn't have to speak about it three times before we see action on it.

One of the problems with being a condo owner or new homeowner is that if you complain about the developer, if you complain about your board—in the case of condo owners—the cost and the value of your unit or your home go down and you can't sell it as easily. So you're caught between a rock and a hard place. That's probably one of the major reasons it's been so difficult for condo owners and new homeowners to really wrestle with this problem and to wrestle with the issue before us, which is Tarion. I want to make that point, because that's why it's so important that condo owners get together, that new homeowners get together, that they speak as a collective rather than as individual unit owners. I'm working with boards in my own riding to make sure that happens.

Second of all, it is absolutely true that condo owners in the province of Ontario have less rights than tenants—less rights than tenants—and tenants rights' are nothing to crow about. This bill will go towards ameliorating that.

Canadians for Properly Built Homes, a group that I've worked with very closely—Karen Somerville; and a shout-out to them—and that is supporting me on the Ombudsman oversight of Tarion, which is another piece as well, have been at this for a long time with the same kinds of problems. They're dealing with a bureaucracy that doesn't listen, a government that says all the right things but doesn't do all the right things. That's the problem here.

In the member from Trinity-Spadina's bill you've got what is necessary in terms of reforming the condo act. It's pretty straightforward; it's pretty obvious. I don't know a better way of doing it. If the government does, it would be interesting to hear a better way of doing it. Certainly, I was very appreciative hearing the member from Willowdale. I suspect he might get into a little bit of

trouble for what he said. What would be really nice would be to hear from the cabinet. What would really be nice is to hear from the Minister of Consumer Services or the Minister of Housing that their ministry is going to take action on this. We've been at this—Mr. Marchese has been at this—for seven years. How much longer? How many more majority governments do the Liberals and the McGuinty government have to get before we get some action on this file?

Again, it's not enough, really, just even to pass it, which I assume we're going to. We need not only to get it to committee, we need to pass this bill. And if not this bill, as the member from Trinity-Spadina said, we need the government to bring forth its own bill for debate that we can move forward on.

Just to reiterate, condo development is a very good thing. Don't get me wrong. We want density in the city of Toronto. We think it's a very good way to live. We think to live in a condo makes a lot of sense. My husband and I rented a condo for a while. We were thinking of buying it, and then we went to a board meeting and learned that the maintenance fees had gone up 50% after the developer pulled up stakes and went away—50%. This is not uncommon. You're sold one bill of maintenance fees and then, all of a sudden, the developer's warranty period ends and the maintenance fees go up. That's one of many, many problems that face condo owners. It shouldn't be that way. This is the forward way of living in big cities. This is what we need more of.

We need to get this right so that more and more people feel comfortable in purchasing units, and so that individual condo owners—and new homeowners, for that matter, because it is the same kind of issue—aren't forced to choose between speaking out and the value of their unit and their condo development going down, or keeping quiet and having the same problems roll along and get passed on to the next owner and the next owner.

In short, absolutely, we should all vote for this bill, but more than that, I really implore the government to move on it. I met with Tarion. I toured their offices. I heard about it. But what we're talking about there, you've heard before. We're talking about the fox in charge of the henhouse here. I'm telling you that if you're going to have a fox in charge of the henhouse, you're going to have developers looking after issues that have to do with developers. You had better have some supervision, and you had better have some even voices within Tarion itself to represent consumers. Again, the member from Trinity-Spadina's bill addresses that.

So let's pass it. Let's do more than pass it here. Let's move it forward to committee, and more than move it forward to committee, let's actually get this government to move on this. We need to hear from them, and we need action so that the lawsuits cease, so that the problems cease, so that the rallies don't have to happen year in and year out, and so that Mr. Marchese's bill becomes law.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Trinity-Spadina has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to thank Linda Pinizzotto, the president of the Condo Owners Association that represents about 200 condominiums in my riding. It's the first condo owners' association we set up in the whole province. She's working hard to set up chapters across the province. I hope they continue to grow and to have the influence on governments that they deserve.

I want to thank the condo owners who came from northern Etobicoke, because they brought to me a problem they are suffering with; that is, they are paying \$1,000 a month in maintenance fees and had \$800,000 in reserve funds disappear. Where did that money go? They don't have a clue. They couldn't get any board meetings. They couldn't get the board to have a meeting to talk about that problem. They had to go to court. The court appointed an administrator, and the administrator is dealing with it but doesn't have to tell them a single word about what happened to that money. There are 10 condominiums that are under an administrator. We found that out not from the Ministry of Consumer Services but from that group that has been fighting this particular problem in court. Thank you for coming today and for all your efforts.

I want to say that we've had five different ministers in the last seven years. How can you have any continuity when ministers come and go? It's just not good. We've got some good developers, some good property managers and some good boards, but when problems exist with any one of these entities, the problems can be horrible.

I want to thank the member from York West, who spoke in favour this year as opposed to last year—he was a little more critical of my bill last year—so that was good, and the member from Don Valley West.

To those of you who have come here today, it appears that this bill will pass. But don't let up, because we need to persuade the Premier and the new Minister of Consumer Services that they've got to make amendments to this bill. Don't let up; keep up the pressure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): For the public who are in the gallery with us today and those watching at home, we will vote on Mr. Marchese's ballot item in about 100 minutes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: On a point of order: I mentioned the member from Don Valley West, but it was the member from Willowdale that I was referring to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Okay, so you're correcting your own record. Thank you.

ARTHUR WISHART AMENDMENT ACT (FRANCHISE DISCLOSURE), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI ARTHUR WISHART SUR LA DIVULGATION RELATIVE AUX FRANCHISES

Ms. Jaczek moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 102, An Act to amend the Arthur Wishart Act (Franchise Disclosure), 2000 / Projet de loi 102, Loi modifiant la Loi Arthur Wishart de 2000 sur la divulgation relative aux franchises.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: At the outset I would like to make sure that everyone knows that this bill, Bill 102, An Act to amend the Arthur Wishart Act (Franchise Disclosure), 2000, is co-sponsored by my colleague from Parkdale–High Park and my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I think that this type of collaboration is something our constituents expect of us. We know that in our ridings many people did not actually vote for us or our party and it is our duty to represent them in this House wherever we can. It has been certainly an interesting and very satisfying experience to work with my two colleagues on this particular bill.

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I'd also like to recognize in the west members' gallery some supporters of the bill: Les Stewart, the founder of the Canadian Alliance of Franchise Operators, and Detective Fred Kerr, the corporate fraud manager for York Regional Police's major fraud unit.

This bill came about because of a constituent, a constituent who came to tell me a very sorry tale about her experience as a potential franchisee. A pizza business placed television, radio, newspaper and magazine advertisements promising a complete business operation with training and support. My constituent was one of several people from across Canada to respond to their ads. She was looking to invest in a franchise as a way to financially provide for her family.

She provided the franchisor with a significant payment to secure a franchise. It turned out that the franchisor was running an elaborate scam across the country, taking money from those who believed they were purchasing a franchise and then disappearing. The pizza business was ordered by the courts not to sell franchises in Canada. No jail time was served; no funds were recovered. The owners of this particular business went on to sell other franchises to other investors in Canada.

This type of extreme situation is something that we believe our bill can, in fact, prevent. We believe that our modest amendment to the disclosure requirements of the existing legislation will, in fact, protect both franchisors and franchisees and allow them to make informed decisions that will certainly prevent future litigation and misunderstanding and allow them to have a profitable business relationship.

It's important to think about exactly what a franchise is. One of the definitions that I liked was one that the Manitoba Law Reform Commission produced in a consultation paper. Essentially, "a franchise is a licence from [the] owner of a trademark or trade name, permitting another to sell a product under that name or mark." It has, over time, evolved into an elaborate set of agreements under which the franchisee undertakes to conduct a

business or sell a product or service in accordance with methods and procedures that are prescribed by the franchisor, and the franchisor undertakes to assist the franchisee through advertising, promotion and other advisory services.

It's also quite instructive to read about the history of franchising in Canada. Essentially, in the beginning, it was government who granted private individuals and corporations the right to carry out activities that would otherwise be restricted to the government. In fact, here in this country, that type of arrangement helped to facilitate the development of infrastructure and services such as railroads, utilities and banking, so that modern private sector franchise actually appeared in Canada in the 1850s.

The Singer sewing machine company attempted to organize themselves in such a fashion. They were not particularly successful, but the concept was developed further by Coca-Cola. They invited regional franchisee bottlers to produce and bottle soft drinks under its trademark, and Coca-Cola's rapid expansion was funded by the franchisees, who in return received exclusive distribution territories and support. General Motors began distributing automobile inventory across the country through individual dealers in 1898. Dealers could purchase vehicles at a discounted price for resale and were granted regional franchise rights. In return, they were required to sell only the products of a single manufacturer. This distribution method shifted to dealers some of the risks of market downturns and proved to be successful for the automobile industry, at least until the recent recession.

Following the Second World War, franchising expanded and became a more and more complicated business. New industries took up the concept, including fast food restaurants, hardware retailers, drug retailers, and motel and hotel services.

By the 1970s, franchising had become a popular method of doing business and an enduring part of the Canadian economy. However, there were high-profile failures associated with this rapid expansion and as growth continued in what was often an unprincipled and unregulated fashion. So, in 1971, the Ontario Minister of Financial and Commercial Affairs established the first public inquiry into franchising in Canada. This resulted in the Grange report, which actually called for legislation and even wanted to establish something described as a franchise bureau and registrar. However, little action was taken, so the franchise business continued in an unregulated fashion until there were a number of disputes that came to the public's attention in the early 1990s.

A particular high-profile pizza franchisor had a large number of its franchisees saying they were subjected to arbitrary cost structures and a feudal-style management structure. So, in 1994, the then Bob Rae government announced the formation of a franchise sector working team to make recommendations on franchise regulation. The team was composed of franchisors, franchisees and government. The team recommended that alternate forms

of resolving franchise disputes should be explored and adopted. They recommended that the Ontario government carry out wide consultations and explore how national harmonized regulatory standards might be pursued.

Nothing happened until 1998, when the then Mike Harris government released a consultation paper on franchise legislation.

MPP Tony Martin introduced a private member's bill in 1999 that dealt with franchising. There were several public hearings that followed, as the government also introduced some draft legislation. The topics of discussion centred around the power imbalance between franchisors and franchisees, the restrictions placed on franchisees for the sourcing of products and services, and the need for provisions for alternative dispute resolution. The result is our current Arthur Wishart Act. But we know that since that act was passed in 2000, we have ongoing problems. We believe that the disclosure provisions in that act are not sufficient and do not offer sufficient protection to both franchisor and franchisee and have resulted in completely unnecessary legal action.

We need to understand that in fact the relationship between the parties to a franchise agreement can often be compared to a marriage. The parties depend on each other for their continued well-being. The relationship is intended to continue for a lengthy period of time, and the arrangement is intended to be satisfactory to both parties.

While franchisors and franchisees generally share a common desire to succeed, there is also a considerable potential for conflict between them, and the parties frequently have dramatically unequal bargaining power. The franchisor is usually a large, sophisticated business organization, has a lot of franchising experience, and may control the terms of the franchise agreement. The franchisee may have little business experience, and they often must take or leave the franchise agreement as offered. They must rely to some extent on the franchise's representations with respect to the potential for business success.

In recruiting an investor to open up a new franchise outfit, a franchisor is, to a large degree, gambling with somebody else's money. Indeed, the franchisor may receive an upfront franchise fee and thus may reap immediate financial gain even if the outfit fails quickly. In the event of failure, the franchisor may be the only buyer for the franchisee's capital equipment and may do so at a deeply discounted price, perhaps reselling it to a future franchisee at a substantial markup. Franchisees are somewhat locked into the relationship by high sunk costs or invested funds that cannot be recovered if the franchise relationship ends. The franchisee continues to be at a disadvantage in relation to the franchisor in terms of access to information and control of operations throughout the franchise relationship and especially during negotiations and at the time the franchise agreement is signed.

The intent of our legislation is to ensure that potential franchisees are provided with information on which to

make important investment decisions and to protect investors from unfair and deceptive business practices in the franchise area. The disclosure requirements of our amendment allow for individuals to do some self-evaluation in terms of understanding their financial commitment. It requires them to consider whether they have the necessary management skills, education and experience to operate a business. The issues for franchisees to consider are things such as the history of the franchise, the financial stability of the operation, the directors or general partners involved, their level of experience, and whether there is ongoing training for franchisees.

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Prospective franchisees should also consider issues with respect to the goods and services they will be selling, offering or distributing, such as demand for the product, fluctuation in sales due to seasonal nature, whether the franchise can carry other lines of goods and whether there is a continual supply at a fair price. There are also issues related to the location of the franchise and their sales territory.

They are also suggested very strongly to consult a lawyer so that they can make sure that the deal they sign is one that they are comfortable with. We believe that this will protect both parties—both franchisee and franchisor—and allow for a far more profitable business relationship.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure, first of all, to co-sponsor this bill with the member from Oak Ridges–Markham and the member from Parkdale–High Park. I have a short time to speak, as I have a couple of other colleagues who would like to speak to the bill. This is not a partisan issue.

Making a decision to take on a franchise is a major decision. I think probably all MPPs have had constituent stories where things have not worked out the way the franchisee expected. Individuals often commit their life savings and money from family and friends towards their business. They rely on the success of their business for their retirement. So they should go into the franchise arrangement with their eyes wide open, and Bill 102, An Act to amend the Arthur Wishart Act, will assist franchisees in exercising their due diligence. In fact, I believe it will improve franchisee-franchisor relations.

The Consumers Council of Canada states:

"Your bill, if passed, would assist all purchasers in understanding their rights and responsibilities when entering into a franchise agreement and improve comparability and competitiveness among franchisors.

"Franchisees have a responsibility to understand the agreements they enter into and should exercise due diligence. The bill would increase understanding about the nature and extent of due diligence and should help moderate costs associated with proper assessment of a given business opportunity."

I think that's well stated.

In the brief time I have to speak, I will just give one constituent story without revealing any names. I had a

constituent come to me who had been a franchisee for 30 years. It was a delivery business. He put in long hours starting at 2 a.m. each day. He'd accrued about \$150,000 in equity in the business.

The franchise agreement had changed over time. He understood there were penalties for breaching the terms of the contract, and he admits he broke what he thought was a fairly minor rule. He thought he might face a bit of a financial penalty but didn't realize that he had the possibility of losing the franchise. But that's what happened. His franchise was sold and he lost all his equity just as he was about to retire; and that business was his retirement fund.

I will note that paragraph 7 in our bill states that part of the educational document is "a statement that it is advisable to have a lawyer and an accountant review the entire franchise agreement, particularly with respect to bankruptcy, termination, renewal, transfer and sale of the franchise."

If this particular constituent had done that, particularly consulting with a lawyer who specializes in franchise law—that is the one thing, from the hearings that we had prior to this bill, that I would advise is probably the most important thing to do.

I would simply say that I hope that members will support the bill and give it a chance to go to committee, where I know that there will be lots of input from those prospective franchisees, from franchisees who have had a bad experience and from franchisors. It's a big business, so they have an interest in it.

I note that the Canadian Franchise Association sent a letter around just yesterday, or a couple of days ago, with some concerns they have. I would encourage them, if it passes and goes to committee, to come to committee and have their say. Otherwise, I would ask that members support this bill. I do believe it will make a difference in this important industry in the province of Ontario. With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour, of course, to help introduce a bill that is sponsored by all three parties. I want to say, first of all, that this is a rare occurrence in this House. In fact, I was part of the first historic one a couple of years ago. That was the first bill in Ontario that had ever been introduced by three parties.

I think it's a very positive step, because I know that the electorate—those watching—have very little patience for the kind of shenanigans and partisan bickering they often see in this place. I think that voters in this province actually want to see work done here. They want to see people get together, negotiate, come up with solutions and move forward. This is one of those historic instances, and it is historic when that is happening. I commend the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for being part of this historic venture.

What is this venture? It is a small but significant step. It is an updating of a bill that has been on the books for a

while and was an attempt to help franchisees in what is often a very unequal relationship. I know that those watching, out there, will think this might be the case with fly-by-night organizations and people who don't know what they're doing. I wish that were the case. Unfortunately, it isn't. Often, those who are involved in paying for a franchise feel very hard done by, by some very well known household names—big companies.

This is why we need to be involved here. We need to be involved with those who often place their life's savings on the line to purchase a business, usually because of the good name of that brand or product. We need to help them move forward with their eyes wide open. This is an attempt to do that. You know that franchises account for about 40% of all retail sales across Canada and in Ontario. That is a significant portion of a market.

I also was privy to the horror story that was the inspiration for this bill: a young woman whose family lost \$150,000—bang, gone—and that was simply flat-out fraud. But what would have helped her, and what would help any potential franchisee, is to read, in a sense, the fine print, to have the franchisor have to answer some questions and to have the franchisee—there's responsibility on both sides here—sign off to say they have read it. We're used to doing this in other transactions that involve major amounts of money; we're used to doing this in every real estate deal; why not in terms of buying a business, which can often involve as much, if not way more, money as buying a house, which is usually the single greatest investment?

I want to read something here that gives you a sense—you don't have to go far on the Net to find stories like this. I have taken out the names of the company and of the person who wrote it, but it gives you a sense of the trauma. This person writes:

"Your dream has always been owning a ... franchise? Ha ha ha ha! Go ahead. You will sell your soul to slave work and you will throw your life away. There was a discussion about this in another Toronto forum and several ... owners joined the discussion. Here are some of the things that were said....

"You will have to buy overpriced ... equipment ... from ... headquarters and not from the manufacturer." The franchisor "buys it from them and they sell it to you at almost double the price."

This is an interesting point, because often companies that are reputable—when you think of the growth of the franchise trade, the idea originally was to take a product that was successful or an idea that has worked extremely well and replicate that, and in replicating it, get that product and that brand name out to a far wider audience, and by doing so, share in a little bit of the profit so that more people can be part of this ever-growing company. But I'm afraid that what sometimes happens is that franchisors see the product as the franchise, not as the product that the franchisee is selling, and that changes the spectrum entirely. This was the case for this poor individual:

"You've seen a congested intersection and suddenly want to take out a franchise and build it there? Ha ha ha ha! Keep dreaming! When you buy a ... franchise, they will tell you where to build it (out of your own money). If they say 'Nova Scotia,' you will have to build it there or else take a hike....

"You work hard for 17 hours a day; doesn't matter if you are the owner and have two slave managers. When one of them quits, guess who is the one that will manage" the franchise "from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. for the next" many weeks "until a replacement is found?"

You spend 90% of your time "hiring and training employees, only for those employees to leave in two months. You are lucky if you keep them for six months with those low wages and long, erratic hours" that are already set by the franchisor. "When finally you trained a replacement, another one quits and you have to stay another week training his replacement."

The franchisor "keeps 10% of your gross earnings without them investing a penny or a minute in your risky venture." They go on.

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This is their experience. This is somebody who lost, or feels they have lost, over \$1 million in their particular franchise escapade.

This is not a problem of small potatoes here; this is a problem of large sums of money people have invested—people, quite frankly, who often have some business acumen under their belts.

What this bill will do is make them read again what they think they know—because people often think they know the terms of the agreement without actually reading them. It will make them read those terms again, it will suggest more steps they can take, it will give them more information from the franchisor so they can make a more informed opinion, and it will require that they sign that they understand what these terms are, what the history of the franchisor is. As the member from Oak Ridges–Markham said, the advantages of getting a lawyer are paramount, a good lawyer who knows that particular franchisor—and also to check with other franchisees in the history of the company, in terms of selling franchises and what those franchisees' experiences have been with that franchisor. All of this is covered in this bill, plus, of course, the Arthur Wishart Act, which this bill amends.

That's what we're asking for here. It's not a lot. As the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka said, there is very much a role here in the development of this bill to be played by the franchisor and their lawyers. We've received letters from their lawyers about this bill, and I'm glad for that input; I think we all are. We welcome that input. The place for that input will be at committee, once this bill moves to the committee. They can bring their input. We can then have that debate. We can do it clause by clause. We can refine and approve the bill, maybe, and move it forward. That's what we're hoping. We're hoping that by moving it forward, by looking at it at committee—hoping we have all-party consent, because just because it's a tri-party bill, it doesn't mean every

member has to vote for it—I hope every member does vote for it today. But as we move it forward, we can provide added, absolutely necessary protection for those who are putting their life savings on the line.

I couldn't do better than what the member from Oak Ridges–Markham did in providing you with a history of this. I find it interesting also, of course, that we have police present, because so often this becomes a matter for the police or for the lawyers. It's not only, for example, the case that was given right off the top of a young woman whose family lost \$150,000 investing in a franchise that never materialized—they just took the money and ran. Not only does she have to do that, but then she had to go to the police, go through the police—and really, this is a business matter, so the police's hands are hampered in terms of processing this and, again, trying to hunt down the perpetrators. And then she had to go to lawyers, too. This is not unusual for those who have had horrible experiences, who have lost their life savings one way or another. You heard the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka speak about another way of losing your life savings. The terms of the franchise agreement change over time without the knowledge and without the say-so of the franchisee. There are many ways of losing your life savings when buying a franchise.

But the next step is usually the police and the lawyer. Not only have you lost the \$150,000, the \$1 million or your retirement savings, but then you have to spend more money out of pocket to try to get a lawyer to try to chase them down and bring them to justice. Of course, we know how that looks. You usually spend more on the lawyer than you recoup from the perpetrator.

This is a situation we have to rectify. It really affects too many small businesses in Ontario. I'm the small business critic for the New Democratic Party, and I can tell you as the small business critic for the New Democratic Party, small business represents 90% of the new jobs in this province. As I said at the front, 40% of all retail sales are done through a franchise. How many small businesses are franchises? Many of them, is the answer—many of them. We want to protect them because they then create jobs, and we're living in a province where jobs are an issue and where we want to do everything we can to protect the jobs at the other end as well as the small business owners who provide those jobs.

Of course I'm going to support this. I commend both my colleagues from the Progressive Conservative Party and the Liberal Party for coming together over this bill and over this important issue. I wish it happened more often in this House. It would be nice to see. I hope that it means, for this particular bill, that this becomes law much more quickly than it would if there were only one of us bringing it forward. I know that's all of our hope. I state that hoping that cabinet ministers who are present and who are listening listen and hear and do the right thing in terms of not only getting it to committee but getting from committee back here for third reading and then made law. That's our hope.

It's a very good day in the Legislature, a day without fractiousness, a day without yelling, a day where all parties act in harmony towards the good of not only the consumer but also of small business owners in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Let me pick up where my colleague from Parkdale–High Park left off. What is this bill, if you're watching? I would call it, to be colloquial, "the caveat emptor alleviation bill." I call it caveat emptor, which is Latin for "buyer beware," because this bill represents a means of setting out conditions that represent a set of criteria to do due diligence for any prospective business owner or someone considering buying a franchise.

Who are we talking to in this bill? When we write a bill, we have someone in mind. We're talking to new Canadians and immigrant investors. We're talking to young people who dream of owning their own business. We're talking to 45-plus businesspeople, long-time employees, who have worked for someone else most of their professional lives and are looking to establish some independence in their middle age and to have an asset that represents a nest egg for their retirement.

This bill is appropriate because a franchise is a turn-key business. For the franchisor it is, in effect, a means of raising money and, when the franchisee chooses to dispose of his asset, a means of returning money to the franchisee. In effect, the franchisor is something of a deposit-taking institution. You could imagine that if the franchisor was a financial institution, it would operate within a very tight framework of regulations.

It's reasonable to impose such a set of regulations on an organization that would approach would-be purchasers who would be making an investment that would be as large as or larger than what they've put into their home and which represents, for nearly all of them, everything that they're going to have of value in the world. If the potential for a franchisor is to reduce the risk to an investor, to a business owner, to optimize returns, to share costs and R&D and to share marketing expenses—if the upside is large, then so too is the downside. The potential to do harm is equally large.

A number of years ago, nearly 20 years ago, I evaluated a franchise. I visited a number of franchisees. I asked a lot of these questions, but I had to look them up. I had to dig back into my old MBA books. I had to depend on my own experience in the business world, and when I look back on it, I consider the decision not to have invested in the franchise one of the best decisions I ever made. In fact, I think to myself, "Imagine if this bill were law and the owner of the Phoenix Coyotes had had the opportunity to get these questions answered." Well, that team might be in Kitchener-Waterloo today.

The Canadian Franchise Association disagrees with the bill. I'm going to cut them a little bit of slack on the scope and the depth of the disclosure. But that's why we have committee hearings. That's where we iron out those problems.

As to the intent of the bill, the intent of the bill is solid. I think if this bill is passed, and I hope that it gets to committee and gets through third reading and is passed, the reforms that it will foster will make it a good piece of legislation.

The table at the moment is too heavily tilted toward the franchisor. In doing that, if a bad franchisee-franchisor relationship leads to civil litigation, civil litigation is not about what's right or wrong; civil litigation is about what is or is not in the contract. The contract is always written by the franchisor, and the contract always protects the franchisor. What this bill does and proposes is that some of the disclosure requirements within it give the franchisee an opportunity to fairly evaluate the business on a level playing field and to make an informed judgement.

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On that note, thank you very much for the time. I'm sure my colleagues will pick up from here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to participate in this debate. I commend my colleagues from all three parties for the initiative in bringing it forward.

First of all, I want to just express my disappointment that, in bringing the bill forward, they haven't followed their own instructions to franchisors in terms of giving appropriate notice. It's interesting that a bill with such significance and impact on such a large part of our economy was given notice of to members a week ago today. If it was tight on time for me to inform myself about the implications of this bill, I can't imagine what the implication is to stakeholders and to all of the people in this province who have investments in franchises and—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: They'll have a chance to stand up—

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, the honourable member says they'll have a chance. The fact of the matter is it would have been nice to have some more opportunity to consult with them before we got into second reading debate. I'm just simply making a point. This is a very important issue. I think there should have been more notice.

I also want to say at the outset that I do not believe that this bill—I have read it carefully—will have any effect on criminal activity. We can have all of the legislation in the world, but if someone wants to develop a scam, they'll develop a scam. That's why we have police officers who help deal with that. The fact of the matter is that there are people, and always will be, who choose to engage in criminal activity. We have them in the banks, with all the regulation in the world. We have them in the high-tech industry, with all the regulation in the world. And we'll probably continue to see them in this country.

I have three specific concerns regarding this proposed legislation. First is the repetition of certain requirements already present in the Ontario act and regulations. I don't know how many members have had the opportunity to

read the existing act, but I have. I look at the regulations in the existing act, and there are numerous, numerous repetitions that we have in this proposed act that are already within the existing regulations.

Second is a lack of clarity as to what exactly the franchisor is responsible to do with respect to the educational document, particularly as a number of the identified elements proposed for inclusion would be speculative at the very least. I've read the document in terms of the educational document that is being proposed, and much of the information that would be there would have to be speculative. If we're saying that a prospective franchisee should be able to rely on that document to make his or her decision about whether to invest, I'm concerned that we're actually setting that person up for a fall because we shouldn't be talking about many of the things that are included in that litany of information in that educational document. It should be factual only without providing for the kind of speculation that's there.

Third, there's no indication as to the repercussions of failure to comply with the educational document requirements and whether or not it would broaden the right of rescission under the act. I think that's very important.

I think that we have here a well-intentioned bill, a well-intentioned proposal, and that is to provide consumer protection. At the end of the day, if one reads the existing act, it makes it very clear—and in fact, one of the line items in the regulations is that prospective franchisees should engage the services of a qualified lawyer and get the appropriate advice relative to the documents and relative to the proposal. So it is buyer beware, and I think that that is, at the end of the day, what we should be sending out as a message to people across this province, regardless of the amount of regulation: Beware. Get the appropriate, professional advice and then make your decision.

Finally, I will support the bill, because on second reading it is a vote on the principle of the bill, and the principle of the bill is to provide more consumer protection. I'm in favour of that. But as this bill goes to committee, I suggest to you that there is much work to be done here. Otherwise, we risk actually undermining a very important sector of our economy; namely, the franchises that serve us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on private members' business, Bill 102, an act to amend the Arthur Wishart Act, 2000. I'd like to commend the members who co-sponsored this private member's bill. I believe it is an excellent and much-needed amendment, and I will give it my full support.

The amendment to the bill would require a franchisor to provide the prospective franchisee with an educational document containing very specific and detailed information. This bill provides a very comprehensive list of things to consider and to investigate prior to entering into an agreement. It allows prospective franchisees to have the opportunity to decide whether this is something that

they believe they can handle, not only from a financial perspective, including start-up and ongoing expenses, but also in terms of leadership, education and previous experience, to name a few. If followed closely, it will certainly help the prospective franchisee in making an informed decision.

I am sure we all have stories that we can tell. I can tell you that a number of years ago, I was made aware of and became involved in the investigation of franchise fraud involving one particular franchisor that affected about 10 of my constituents. This person defrauded approximately 16 potential franchisees using the same nonexistent real estate location over and over again. These were honest, hard-working people who used their hard-earned money. Their life savings were used to invest, only to discover that they had been defrauded. They did pursue legal action against the franchisor that operated under different names. The courts ordered in favour of the franchisees; however, they were never able to collect. There was no place for them to turn, and very little assistance was available to help them recover their hard-earned dollars.

As I mentioned, I'm definitely in support of this bill. I would like to make a small suggestion which would provide a further level of security for franchisees. I'm sure a lot of people will consider it a little bit tough, but I think it's worth considering as the bill moves through committee in second reading.

As this bill moves through, I would recommend that the committee seriously consider that a transaction between a franchisor and a franchisee is no different than someone buying real estate; that there is a purchasing agreement and there is a deposit, and that all those deposits be kept in trust until the franchisor delivers that product, goods or services that were contracted for. This way, for the person investing in a particular franchise, their money is protected until they actually become the owner-operator of that franchise. There will be no risk to their investment, as I have seen with my constituents losing in their venture.

I'm fully in support of this. I hope that amendment will be considered when committee looks at it, and I'm glad to add my two bits to this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to join the debate on this bill, which has been brought forward by three of our colleagues from all three parties. I want to acknowledge the work that they've undertaken to develop the bill that we have before us, Bill 102, the Arthur Wishart Amendment Act (Franchise Disclosure), 2010.

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We have the honourable member for Oak Ridges–Markham, the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka and, of course, the member for Parkdale–High Park. I think they have brought before us a bill which is important to aspiring men and women who want to pursue goals and want to do so in a business environment where there is clarity and transparency and a free and accurate flow of

information. That's particularly important if you're going to be establishing a business; it is essential.

Of course, the people who become involved in these enterprises make a very important contribution to our economy. These individuals who have brought forth this bill are to be complimented.

I do share the concern, though, of my colleague about the fact that there was very little in the way of notice given to all of the people who are going to be impacted by this legislation. Of course, we have heard from the Canadian Franchise Association, which was obviously not aware of what was going on and is deeply concerned about the bill. They feel it may not achieve its desired effect and will ultimately create significant confusion that could have a detrimental impact on franchisors and prospective franchisees and, ultimately, the Ontario economy.

It is important that this bill, if passed, which I will be supporting, has a very significant amount of public consultation because this bill will have a significant impact on many parties. Hopefully, if the bill is passed, if the bill moves forward to a committee, there will be ample time and ample notice given in order that all those who are going to be impacted can be consulted.

I would say that what's important at the end of the day is that everybody who makes a decision to purchase a franchise, which can be a complex and emotional decision, has the opportunity to understand completely what it is that they're about to get involved in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm pleased to rise on Bill 102. I compliment the members from Oak Ridges–Markham, Parkdale–High Park and Parry Sound–Muskoka. I really appreciate the fact that they've all come together. I see strong support amongst the Liberals, as I do for all bills that have been raised here today. I personally will support this bill that is in front of us.

This bill, in my mind, is not only for the franchisees; it is really for both the franchisee and the franchisors. It is imperative that both ends of the agreement be strengthened. This bill amendment, as indicated earlier, is really to require a franchisor to provide a prospective franchisee with an educational document containing specified information. I know we all are aware that the franchisee is really the purchaser or the operator, and, of course, the franchisor is the original vendor or owner or principal who sold the franchise.

There are nine key points raised throughout, and I'd like to just touch on one or two. When you think about it, they really make sense when you see some of these revisions: "Self-evaluation criteria for the prospective franchisee to consider, including ... whether the prospective franchisee has the capital required for investment ... whether the prospective franchisee has the necessary management skills, education and work experience"—remember that word "education."

"Issues for the prospective franchisee to consider in respect of the franchisor and the businesses associated

with the franchise, including”—and they list a number—“the franchisor’s background and how long the franchisor has been offering franchises”—and the list goes on.

I looked very briefly at the Consumers Council of Canada correspondence. They make one significant point, and that is, “Your bill, if passed, would assist all purchasers in understanding their rights and responsibilities when entering into a franchise agreement and improve comparability and competitiveness among franchisors.”

I particularly noticed, a couple of weeks ago, an article in the *Toronto Star*. It was by one of their excellent writers, James Daw, with the heading, “MPPs Seek Anti-Swindling Law for Franchises.” It’s a wonderful article that mentions several points. Canadian Franchise Association president Lorraine McLachlan questioned why legitimate franchisors would be singled out to educate and inform investors.

Quite frankly, you’re simply adding to the legitimacy of franchisors, and that degree of appreciation would rise. It would reverify that they are the very best in franchising in North America and quite legitimate and great corporate citizens. You just can’t go wrong in doing something like that.

Fifty-one years ago, I started a part-time business as a teenager. I’m getting up there, but I do point out that it was as a teenager. It’s been 51 years of learning something every day. Every day that we learned something, we learned it the hard way because it cost us money. I want to do a small token in this legislation that indicates that those people going forward with franchises will not lose all of the money that we have lost.

I can tell you that, in Ontario, business is strong. If there are more jobs, more corporate tax will then be paid and less personal tax would be paid. It only makes sense. It’s good business. What’s good for Ontario is good for our taxpayers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Oak Ridges–Markham has up to two minutes for a response.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I’d like to thank the members from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Parkdale–High Park, Mississauga–Streetsville, Newmarket–Aurora, Scarborough–Rouge River, Kitchener–Waterloo and Ajax–Pickering for their comments.

I want to reassure the two members who raised the issue of sufficient notice and consultation that, in fact, the three members who have sponsored this bill held an extensive meeting with a number of stakeholders, including the Canadian Franchise Association, in the spring. We listened to them carefully. In fact, we did somewhat amend our original thoughts—I see the member for Parkdale–High Park nodding—because we were considering perhaps some more stringent conditions.

We feel that what we have done is something that took us a little bit of time to get right. In fact, one of our guests here today, Mr. Stewart, the founder of the Canadian Alliance of Franchise Operators, has stated, “I have carefully reviewed this private member’s bill and really appreciate the significant work that it demonstrates

by your group and other stakeholders. I unreservedly support this bill and look forward to its rapid passage into law.”

Ric Borski, president and CEO of Better Business Bureau of Midwestern and Central Ontario, has also stated, “It is at times like this, in a declining job environment, that unscrupulous entrepreneurs are offering all kinds of high-risk investments and franchise opportunities, luring the unemployed into situations that could cause them to lose their severance pay and life savings.

“Your proposed amendments would certainly force potential franchisees to more carefully navigate these unknown waters, lessening their chance of making a financial mistake that they could regret for the rest of their lives.”

Our bill protects franchisees. It allows franchisors to make their case very clearly to their investors. I would urge all members of this House to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has expired. We will vote on Ms. Jaczek’s ballot item in about 50 minutes.

CHILDREN’S LAW REFORM AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI PORTANT RÉFORME DU DROIT DE L’ENFANCE

Mr. Craiton moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 22, An Act to amend the Children’s Law Reform Act / Projet de loi 22, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l’enfance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Kim Craiton: It’s always a pleasure to stand in this House with my colleagues. I’ve been blessed with being a provincial member of Parliament for seven years in four different sessions of Parliament. In every session of Parliament, I’ve introduced changes to the Children’s Law Reform Act—in each session. To date, I’m sad to say, I have not been successful other than getting it as far as committee hearings.

My goodness, this bill is really one of the most modest bills that I’ve ever seen put forward, but it’s a bill that has enormous support in terms of grandparents. It’s supported by the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, supported by the CAW, supported by the Chatham–Kent Black Historical Society and supported by Can-Grands National Kinship Support. I’m going to mention some people a little bit later who have taken the time to come out today to support the bill.

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I’ve also received thousands and thousands of petitions, phone calls and emails from grandparents across this country—not just Ontario, but across this country. The House may also remember that I introduced a

number of petitions that were given to me by Alex and Olga Alexander, who really put a lot of time and effort into their support for this bill. In fact, they have sent to most members this package, which is to give you information about how passionate they are about grandparents having rights. This is not a prop; this is grandparents' rights support information.

As I said, twice this bill was successful in getting to second reading. I'm hoping that this time—my goodness, this time—this very simple and basic bill to amend the Children's Law Reform Act will get to third reading and will be passed by this House.

What does the bill do? It's pretty simple. It simply permits grandparents to have the right to access, the right to visitation and the right to custody if they make an application before the courts. What it does is it asks the courts to consider, in custodial cases, if access to grandparents is in the child's or the children's best interests and judge accordingly.

Frankly, this bill—although I say “grandparents,” it's really about children. Far too often, when a marriage breaks down, children and their biological grandparents become, sad to say, pawns in an emotional power game—sometimes, the family of the wife is upset with the husband and suddenly decides the grandparents can't see the children anymore; I can't tell you the thousands of cases I've heard that from—a power game in which children and loving grandparents both lose because they are not allowed at the table of consideration. This is sad; this is really, truly sad.

The Children's Law Reform Act as it stands right now, without this amendment, does respect the rights and interests of all family members, but that's on paper. When you get to court and you're sitting in front of a judge, the reality steps in. Grandparents are constantly told by the courts that they can't assist them—because they can't see their grandchildren, they can't have access to their grandchildren, they can't visit their grandchildren. The law provides rights to grandparents in theory, but in practice that's not the case.

I'm going to illustrate a couple of situations, actual cases.

In one case, the couple's daughter's marriage broke down. Unfortunately, she ended up in a very physically abusive relationship that involved the grandchildren. Prior to this, the grandparents had unlimited access to their grandchildren—a joyous relationship. Concerned about possible physical abuse of the children, they expressed some concerns to the daughter's abusive partner. The daughter decided she would end all contact with the grandparents; they can't see the grandchildren again. In this case, they followed up by going into the courts. What they were granted by the courts: an order of two hours a visit once a month and telephone access once a week—call them up on the phone: “How are you doing?” That was it.

Here, I want to quote you what the judge said. The judge said, “Although you,” as grandparents, “have presented a very good case, and I do agree that you should have much more time with your grandchildren,

unfortunately you're just grandparents.” That's how the judge looked at it: “Unfortunately, with the current legislation, you're just grandparents, so this is the best I can do for you.” That is just absurd. In fact, that's disgraceful. But unfortunately, that's the reality. When grandparents get in front of the courts, they are told they have no jurisdiction, no standing and no case. After all, they're “just grandparents.”

But that's not the way the Children's Law Reform Act reads. It reads in such a way that you have the impression that you have some rights, but that's not what happens when you get to court.

I also want to tell you about another situation, an extremely sad situation in my own riding of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Two people I have come to know and become friends with and love dearly—their daughter was stricken with cancer and she died. For six years the couple provided care and support for their dying daughter and looked after the grandchildren. Shortly after the daughter's death, the former son-in-law entered into a new relationship and took custody, and they decided that the grandparents could never see the grandchildren again. There was no explanation, no logic. I talk to these grandparents quite often, and I can't tell you the tears that they shed and the emotions they're going through.

Seven years ago they were the first grandparents who visited me to make me aware of their plight, and since then many more have come

Many people call this the grandparents' rights bill, and I do, too, all the time. But actually it's wrong in one way, because as I said, this is about grandchildren's rights. The bill is about grandchildren being denied a very important relationship that only grandparents can offer. I know that many of my colleagues are grandparents, so they know exactly what I'm saying. Can you imagine that you can't see your grandchild or grandchildren again—can you imagine that?—after you've had a great relationship with them.

In conclusion, I want to say a couple of other things. This is a quote from another case, a family in Brighton, Ontario: “In the cases of death or divorce ... grandparents should be able to enjoy access to our grandchildren.... As I am getting older I miss out on the joys of being able to talk to her, to watch her grow.

“I ask, why have I been punished? What have I done so wrong to not be able to see my granddaughter anymore?”

What we have is a pretty unique situation. The bill doesn't really change a lot. If you look at the bill, and many people have, it just adds in the word “grandparents” in three separate locations. It says that when the courts are looking at an application for custody, they should consider an application from a grandparent. It actually puts the word “grandparent” in there; it doesn't exist now. When there's an application for visitation, the word “grandparent” is put in there, and when there's an application to access the child, it's put in there. So it is just three words that are put into the Children's Law Reform Act. That's all it does.

I will share with the House that of course I've had people call me who are opposed to this bill—very few. But I understand why they're opposed. I make a point of calling people back, so if you call me from Ottawa, you're going to get a phone call; if you call me from London, you're going to get a phone call. No matter where you're calling me from, if you're calling me about Bill 22, I'm going call you back. So I've become educated in terms of why some people feel strongly that maybe this bill is the wrong bill.

I'm going to say quite clearly in the House that there are certainly some situations where some grandparents should not see the grandchildren. There are some—I've talked to some; I understand that. There's some relationship there that has been very negative. So I reassure these people, when they tell me their personal story of why they don't want the grandparents to see their grandchildren, that this bill does not just give a grandparent an automatic right. What it does do is it tells the courts to look at the application with more significance, but always where it's in the best interest of the child. The child always comes first.

One other sad story I will share with you is about someone I have become very close friends with. Their daughter was killed, murdered, behind a public school. The husband had nothing to do with it, but the husband decided that he did not want to have the children. So these grandparents decided that they were going to raise them, but there's a process they have to go through. So they went into the courts to try to get custody. It took a year and a half, maybe two years—and \$30,000 later—to get custody of their two grandchildren. They didn't have the money, but they found it.

I visit them regularly. The grandchildren are just doing wonderful. The grandparents are in heaven. They're making ends meet. But most importantly, they are in a home with love and caring, with someone who has a relationship with them and wants to be with them.

I'm asking my colleagues in the House to support my bill, and I'm looking forward to the debate by members of all parties and to hearing what their points of view are. Thank you very much.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak, on behalf of the PC caucus, in support of Bill 22. I'd also like to thank the grandparents who are here today and those we have all heard from in our constituencies who are very concerned about maintaining access to their grandchildren, and also from a number of advocacy groups, including Mrs. Alexander, who has sent me her package and who is a tremendous advocate on behalf of grandchildren and grandparents and their right to have contact with each other.

Most of us carry special memories of our grandparents. We remember the unique relationship we formed with them, through a grandparent's unconditional love and abundance of kindness. Their wisdom gained in

different times has often helped to guide all of us successfully into the future.

September 12 was Grandparents Day. Yet despite the important role that grandparents play in most of our lives, I'm sad to say that this day is often overlooked. Grandparents Day is a time to thank or remember our own grandparents and the special role they have played in our lives. It's also a time to acknowledge the grandparents who are the primary caretakers of their grandchildren. According to Statistics Canada's 2006 census, across our country over 200,000 children aged 14 and under shared a home with their grandparents. Of these children, over 65,000 had no other parent present in the home. In Ontario, over 22,000 children live with their grandparents without another parent present. Of these children, close to 9,000 are 14 or younger.

Despite the significant and unique role grandparents around the world play in children's lives, about 75,000 grandparents in Ontario are denied access to their grandchildren, as was so ably pointed out by the member for Niagara Falls. This affects more than 100,000 children in our province. The importance of the grandparent-grandchild relationship has been acknowledged by the PC party for decades. In 1987, former member Terry O'Connor introduced Bill 201, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act, which identified the importance of maintaining the emotional ties between a child and his or her grandparents. Since that time, members of all parties have continued to introduce legislation with a similar purpose. The member for Niagara Falls has continued this tradition, and it's my sincere hope that this bill will finally find itself before a legislative committee so we can deal with it and get it passed.

The purpose of Bill 22 is not unique to Ontario. Provincially, efforts to acknowledge the importance of the grandparent-grandchild relationship and the presumption that contact with a grandchild is in the child's best interests have been incorporated into legislation in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Alberta, Quebec, British Columbia and Yukon. Bill 22 will move Ontario in the direction of these provinces while still keeping the best interests of the child paramount.

It should be noted also that jurisdiction for child custody and access is shared by the federal and provincial governments. Bill 22 will not change the situation for applications under the federal Divorce Act, which, like the Children's Law Reform Act, does not recognize grandparents specifically. Rather, both pieces of legislation currently permit any other person to apply for custody or access, and applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis in light of the best interests of the child.

I certainly support Bill 22 and look forward to this matter being in committee—I'm being optimistic about this, because this is such an important issue—so that we can hear from community and legal experts, from grandparents and hopefully from grandchildren.

On the issue of the best interests of the child, I would also like to speak briefly about another situation that is

similar, and that is where a child is in the primary care and custody of a grandparent. As I mentioned previously, there are about 22,000 children right now in Ontario who find themselves in that situation. Recently, I had the opportunity to speak with one of my constituents who finds himself in that role and pointed out another issue with our child welfare system that I believe needs to be corrected.

This constituent's grandson has been in his care for about a year and a half. The child is about four years old now, and the grandparents were given primary custody through a court application. Recently, one of the parents has decided to dispute custody and the matter is going before the courts in the next few months.

Now, I point out, before I mention more specifics on this case, that this is not the fault of the children's aid society. The children's aid societies across Ontario are doing a wonderful job with the children in their care, and I'd particularly like to applaud the efforts of the Durham Children's Aid Society. Rather, this is the fault of the legislation which the children aid's societies are simply following.

The situation with this gentleman is this: There are three workers involved with him and his grandchild. One is a kinship worker for the grandparents, one a family case worker for the parents, and the third is a child case worker for the child. These people don't communicate with each other. They're not allowed to. I have to ask myself, how can that possibly be in the best interest of the child for them not to be able to have this discussion? I would certainly point to this as an issue in the area of our child welfare system that needs to be urgently addressed because this gentleman is not the only grandparent who is having to deal with this, and he's primarily concerned about the welfare of his grandchild.

We may be able to learn from some other jurisdictions. There are some programs in the United States that have been introduced to help kinship caregivers find the information and resources they need to support the children of their relatives and to network with each other. These kinship programs recognize that caregivers often experience a number of financial, physical and emotional difficulties as a result of care, including a lack of financial resources, fatigue, personal health problems and a lack of personal time. They support caregivers who may lack the resources and information to help them cope with raising the children of their relatives, usually their grandchildren. Grandparents are eager to do this, but we need to be able to give them the support they need in order to be able to give the best care possible to their grandchildren. In any event, Bill 22 is one positive thing that we can all work on together in order to acknowledge the important and unique role that grandparents play in their grandchildren's lives.

It should be noted, as the member from Niagara Falls noted, that the best interests of the child will continue to be paramount. This is not a *carte blanche* that grandparents have to be involved in every situation where their grandchildren are being considered, but rather it puts it on the list of one of the things that should be considered

when you're talking about the best interests of the child. I think for most families the relationship with the grandparents is very positive and should be encouraged. We should do everything that we can to encourage that.

I'm pleased to support the member from Niagara Falls, and I hope that all members of this Legislature will also support this important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm pleased to rise today in reference to Bill 22 that is before us courtesy of the member from Niagara Falls. I too have a number of concerns. I'm pleased to see this bill coming forward. I'm pleased to see it, hopefully, going ahead today. I can tell you that the bill is to amend the Children's Law Reform Act. It's all about the children. It's not about the grandparents or the parents. It's about all three but, particularly, it is about the children.

I can just give you a couple of sentences from a correspondence from one of the dear grandmothers. Here's a typical example that you will run up against, and I'm sure some of you have heard this yourself. It's very difficult to pronounce because the child is very, very young, but the essence of the quotation is, "Grandma I have to tell you suthing"—I have to tell you something—"and mom wrey fitying"—the girl drew two stick figures fighting. "Frowd knife at my door. I call 911. I was scare." Obviously this child is very, very young. "The police came thay say lost of qeshdens." What she means there, is they asked a lot of questions. The next sentence is all appropriate: "Can I live with you? Love"—and of course we will withhold the name.

Another one is, quite simply, so and so "is moveing out of my house so you miet visit here."

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There are a number of statements that go on like that. I have correspondence also from one of the families in my riding that are having issues with their family and having the opportunity to see their grandchildren. They are married 40 years, are in their 60s, have their own family of four, and now they don't have access to see a grandchild. I can tell you, that is devastating to them. They are a wonderful couple. They have raised their family properly. It's just one of those family scenarios that has occurred.

One of the paragraphs that they have passed on to me: "With no grandparents' rights law in Ontario, we have little hope for taking any legal action to the courts. We are powerless to gain access ... without a change in the current legislation. I know and I truly believe that our son will come around in years to come and reconcile with us, but we are not getting any younger.... Who knows how much time we have left? Every day is important in the life of a child with his grandparents. Regrettably, this will become fairly clear to our son when his own son ... starts to grow up, act out, and becomes a teenager. But it will be too late for [his son] and for us."

The member from Whitby-Oshawa mentioned a wonderful family that had sent along some information to

each of us. There are just a couple of quotations in it; I would like to just pass on one or two to you. There is one in particular from someone who was one of my favourite television heroes, a gentleman by the name of Bill Cosby: "What is it about grandparents that is so lovely? I'd like to say that grandparents are God's gift to children. And if they can but see, hear and feel what these people have to give, they can mature at a fast rate." Another quotation is: "Nobody can do for little children what grandparents do. Grandparents sort of sprinkle stardust over the lives of little children."

I think in my own family—I just have to relay to you some personal scenarios. My mother was born an only child. Her parents, as was quite prominent in those days in farm country, married very late. Thank God for mother; she had 10 wonderful children—well, nine, at least, if you don't count me. She did lose one, but there are still nine of us. It was just a joy to be there. It was a joy for my mother in the balance of her life; unfortunately, she passed away seven years ago. It is a joy for my father, who has 15 grandsons, three granddaughters—that's a total of 18—and some 34, as of yesterday, great-grandchildren. It helps keep him young at 93 years of age.

When I look around and count my blessings, my wife and I are very fortunate. We have four grandchildren between the ages of one and seven. They're wonderful. Our children are great. Their spouses are wonderful. We indeed are extremely blessed. We hope we never have the concerns that so many people have for access, visitation or, in extreme scenarios, custody.

Something hit me very close; it just about stopped me in my tracks, two days ago. My wife called to say that our daughter, who is five weeks away from having another baby, was having some heart problems with the baby. They rushed her to the hospital. My wife is a registered nurse. To make a long story short, once I got the first call, I did two things that don't happen as a regular occurrence. First of all, I cried; and secondly, I prayed. Thank God, within a few hours my wife called back and said, "Things are going to be fine," but what we really want here today is things to be fine for all grandparents.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a privilege to stand today and debate.

I want to say to my colleague from Niagara Falls that I admire his tenacity. This is the fourth time, I understand, that he has brought forward this same bill. This will be the fourth time—today I am absolutely assured that it will pass.

But what is wrong with this scenario? What is wrong with the scenario of the other two bills that we've debated today? My friend from Trinity-Spadina—his bill has been here three times, and I'm reasonably assured, from the speeches that were made today, that it will pass too. The second bill of today has been before this House before, and I'm reasonably assured, since it's all three

parties—this is a co-sponsored bill—that it's going to pass too. What is wrong with this scenario?

The member from Niagara Falls has come up with a good idea that everyone in this House agrees with. Sure—and he has admitted—there are some circumstances that may make it problematic. He's had some phone calls. It will require, I'll sure, some tinkering at committee. But the problem is, it never gets there.

We in opposition are quite powerless when it comes to doing the right thing. We can vote here today—and we will, I'm sure, at the conclusion of these three bills—to send it to committee. It will go off to committee and it will likely die there, the same that happened to the member from Niagara Falls three times before, the same that happened to the member from Trinity-Spadina twice before, the same that happened with the Wishart bill on a couple of occasions. We need to do something in this House so that good ideas do not die like this. We need to have some kind of mechanism so that it is not up to the government of the day, and the government of the day alone, to decide which bills go forward and which bills do not.

This is a hugely emotive issue for grandparents and for all of us. It is a good bill.

I know that in the House of Commons in Ottawa, because they are blessed with minority government after minority government, that private members' bills actually mean something. They actually proceed. They don't all pass. There was a historic vote yesterday on dismantling the gun registry that didn't pass by two votes, 153 to 151, but it went through the entire process to get there. In a minority government, parties can negotiate, the bills can be brought forward, they have a life, they can be brought and debated in the House, they go to third reading, and they actually can become law. This is difficult in a government with a strong majority position, because all the votes rest on one side.

I don't know whether anything can be done with this bill, but I am saying to my colleagues opposite in the Liberal Party that our colleague from Niagara Falls deserves to have this bill go somewhere. He deserves, and the grandparents in Ontario and the people and the children in Ontario deserve, to have this bill go somewhere and to have something done with it. Families don't need to have this go in limbo again. They don't need the emotional turmoil of having it debated again and again and again and again and seeing that nothing happens.

So, at the conclusion of this, if you agree with the member from Niagara Falls—and I do—vote for it, but don't vote for it unless you want something to happen to it. Don't vote for it just because you say, "Okay, here's another one. We'll forget about this tomorrow." If you're going to do that, vote no. Have the courage of your convictions. Vote yes if you want it to proceed to committee, and then go to caucus and make sure that it does. I can't go to that caucus, but you can. And I will tell you, if it comes to our caucus, this would be a kind of bill that I think should proceed.

On the merits of the bill, Madam Speaker—it's good to see you in the chair—I have to state at the outset that I

am not a parent. My wife and I have been married for 35 years, but we have no children. And by extension, because I have no children, I have no grandchildren and I have no great-grandchildren. That goes without saying. But I do know the love that grandparents have for their children. I know what extended families often look to in terms of love and support for their children, sometimes their nieces and nephews, their grand-nieces, grand-nephews, what extended families used to mean and, in fact, in many places still do.

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I remember, when I was a boy, the love my grandparents showed to me, to my two brothers, to all my extended cousins. I know how pivotal they were to our relationship and how they cared. I know that when my mother was forced to go out to work for a while—my father worked; my mother was forced to go out for a while—it was my grandmother who looked after me. It was my grandmother to whom I went after school and at lunchtime.

It is inconceivable to me that that relationship would not be allowed, so I want to support this and try to put myself in the position of the people who are here today, the people who are supporting this bill. They love; they deserve to be able to show that love. They deserve to be able to be with their grandchildren.

I know that other provinces have dealt with this. They've done it successfully, and it causes no umbrage, no grievance, no problem, as far as I am aware. The Quebec Civil Code has the strongest language, and section 611 states, "In no case may the father or mother, without a grave reason, interfere with personal relations between the child and his" or her "grandparents."

That's the law in Quebec.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's quite strong and clear.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's pretty strong; stronger than this bill. And that's the law.

You have to show cause why these grandparents cannot see their grandchildren. It is a matter of right for them to see them, even if there's a divorce, a messy divorce, a family break-up, feuding between spouses. It's their right unless someone can show cause.

We look at what's happening in Manitoba on our other border: pretty simple stuff. In 2006, Manitoba initiated a provincial strategy called Grand Relations so that grandparents and extended family members would have better options and more help to resolve access and guardianship disputes. For four years, Manitoba has done the right thing.

To be clear, the Manitoba law, number one, provides for a grandparent adviser so somebody is there to advise grandparents what to do when situations get a little sticky in the courts or in mediation. The second thing it does is it provides a new, leading-edge alternative to court: programs such as piloting First Choice, a new dispute resolution service; For the Sake of the Children, an education program for families; and an aboriginal model of dispute resolution such as a healing circles and out-of-court settlements for First Nations. Manitoba does other things. It strengthens the legislation so that courts must,

by law, consider grandparents in the family equation. The fourth thing it does is it creates a Manitoba-wide education campaign around this issue so that everybody knows that grandparents have rights and that those rights need to be respected, save and except in those rare circumstances where they cannot be. Last but not least, in Manitoba they created a grandparent fostering outreach program to assist as well.

This bill is a small step. It puzzles me with all my heart why we're debating this for a fourth time. If anyone on the government side can tell me why the member from Niagara Falls has not been able to convince your caucus to put this bill forward or, if they have a better alternative, to come up with a government—I'm sure he'd be happy with a government bill. He'd probably be ecstatic with a government bill, if there are brighter minds among you who can come up with something better.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And the opposition parties agree.

Mr. Michael Prue: And we agree.

If there was a bill in this House put forward by the government that was in any way the same as this, I'm sure it would pass first, second and third reading in a few weeks—I'm sure. No one is going to fight this; no one's going to say it's wrong.

I do understand—and I need to spend a minute or two on those who are critical of the bill or who have some concerns. I know that the Ontario Women's Justice Network gave some information that was shared by my colleague from Parkdale-High Park the last time this bill was debated. They gave an example—something I think we need to be careful of—of how a mother leaving an abusive partner will want to ensure that her children's safety is protected. That's normal; that's natural. She may wish to limit access by the paternal grandparents because of concerns that the grandparents will not protect the child from their father or may cause some other difficulties.

I understand that, but I think this is the exception; this is not the rule. This is something where you go to court and say, "I don't want access," or "We don't want access for this reason," and the court will look at that and determine whether that makes sense. But in all other cases where the court rules that there is no harm to the child, then the ordinary thing that should happen, that has happened around this world forever—ever since there were families, there were siblings, grandparents, extended families and whole villages who helped to bring up a child. We need to get back to that, and these grandparents need to be part of that same equation that has existed for tens of thousands of years. To stand in the way is morally wrong.

To the member from Niagara Falls: Go with this. Fight with this. Make your caucus understand. Take it to committee, and maybe, before this Parliament is finished, we'll do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: In the few minutes that I have, I want to commend our colleague from Niagara Falls for bringing this bill forward yet again, as has already been said. I commend him for his persistence for this cause. I also want to thank the many grandparents from across the province who engaged in probably the most effective lobby that I have ever experienced since I've been a member of this Legislature.

I get many letters, many emails, many phone calls. When I got that package with all those ribbons—and as intricate as it was, first of all, I thought it might be an intelligence test for me, to see if I could get into the package. I must admit, I had some problems with one or two of them. But as I worked my way through that package, I realized that in my case, what Mrs. Alexander was trying to communicate to me was, first of all, how passionately she and her husband felt and feel about the importance of having a relationship with their grandchildren, and the work to which they were willing to go to communicate that to us and hopefully elevate the message to a different level.

One of the reasons I'm such a well-adjusted person is because of my Oma, who I had the blessing of living with from the time that I was a child until I was 10 years old, when she passed on. As in many European families, she lived with us. She was essentially a caregiver to me, day in and day out. If there was one single influence in my life, it was her. She created and was for me a constant, always there. You talk about unconditional love; there isn't any place where that can come from more so than the heart of a grandparent.

So I say to our honourable colleague that what he is doing by bringing this legislation forward is more for children than it is for grandparents because, ultimately, they are the ones who will benefit from having that relationship. I say to the Premier of this province: Please listen to your member, because as my colleague from Beaches–East York said, we will pass this; we can pass this. Whether it becomes law is up to the Premier. It is up to the Premier to say to his caucus and his cabinet, “This is the right thing to do.”

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So as a next step in your lobby, I say to the grandparents across the province, put your focus on the Premier. The member from Niagara Falls has done his job. The members in here will have done their work. It is the Premier who, at the end of the day, will have the final say as to whether this becomes law, and it is in his hands.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to join the debate today. Certainly I commend the member from Niagara Falls for bringing forward this bill. As has been said by other members of the House, this isn't the first time that it has come forward. We all sort of live in hope that this is the last time it needs to come forward and that perhaps it moves on to the committee stage and eventually becomes law.

I think we draw on our own personal experiences when we bring our advice and our comments to the

Legislature when it comes to pieces of legislation such as Bill 22. One of the voids in my life is that I only ever knew really one of my grandparents, and she died when I was very, very young. Two of my grandparents were killed in the blitz during the Second World War—I never knew them. Despite constant hints and urging from my wife, my son hasn't decided to make me a grandfather yet, so I'm still ready to experience that stage of my life. It's a bit of a mystery to me. But when I talk to people now around my age who are starting to become grandparents, people tell me it's a wonderful thing. I think this is doing something that is just going to enrich that experience, and I commend the member.

We used to be of the opinion, certainly in the 1960s and the 1970s when we started to see perhaps the break-up of the nuclear family in a lot of ways—there used to be a saying that children will bounce back. They're resilient. Don't worry about them; they'll bounce back. That turned out to be not very true. It turned out to be more, I think, for the convenience of the adults who may be parting ways to make them feel better that the children were going to bounce back. Often, they didn't bounce back very well. Often, it had an impact on them that went undiagnosed and unrecognized.

Anything we can do to assist children in a time of need, such as what's being proposed here by the member from Niagara Falls—it's something that is obviously in children's best interests and something that, I think, when you look at the different cultures around the world and certainly, when we look at our country—there are a number of cultures that are represented; not all the cultures in the world are represented—somewhere in our society, grandparents always have a special place.

There's always a certain elevated position that is given to grandparents in any society because of the role they play. Quite often it's because of the experience they've had. Quite often it's because of the numbers of years they've lived. Quite often it's because of the wisdom they bring to the family. I think that anything we can do to elevate the rights of grandparents in our society while, at the same time, elevating the rights of children to the best upbringing we can possibly provide them during times, perhaps, of trouble, is something that this House should take very, very seriously.

The member himself is showing resilience, bouncing back and bringing the bill forward to the House. I would hope that it would receive the support of all members present here today. I hope you will give the member the opportunity to take it forward and make some of the changes that I think are just going to make the fabric of our society so much stronger. It will make those young people today who perhaps don't have access to their grandparents—and obviously there are some circumstances where that access perhaps shouldn't take place, but in the vast majority of cases where access should take place and would be a positive thing for the child, this is going to enable our legal system to deal with that in a much more formal way.

It's going to elevate the status of our grandparents. It's going to give people in our society who want to con-

tribute to the upbringing and raising of our children in a positive way more opportunities to do that.

Despite some of the other opinions that have been expressed, I can't for the life of me see how, in the vast majority of cases where this comes into play, that is not going to be a positive thing for Ontario and Ontario's children.

As I said, I really want to commend the member for his tenacity. I want to thank the grandparents for showing up once again, to hear the debate once again.

There are a lot of sayings you could bring to bear on this: The squeaky wheel gets the grease; water dripping on a rock eventually wears through. I think it's one of those issues whose time has come. I think people are starting to recognize that. I think there will be overwhelming popular support to see this bill actually become law.

I certainly will be supporting it. I commend it to the other members of the House. At the same time, I want to express my admiration for the member from Niagara Falls for sticking to his guns and bringing this forward once again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Niagara Falls has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Kim Craitor: First I want to certainly thank my colleagues from Oakville, Ajax-Pickering, Whitby-Oshawa, Newmarket-Aurora and Beaches-East York for their kind, wonderful and caring comments—extremely touching.

It's interesting: I think this is the time in Parliament that I love the best—private members' time—because we actually talk from our hearts and don't let politics get in the way. I thank the members for that.

This chamber, I'm going to tell you, could easily have been filled today; there's no question. I think of all the people I talked to who wanted to come down to Queen's Park and wanted to be here. I said to them, "You know, it's a long drive; it's a long trip to come in. Watch it on TV. We know we have your support." I thank all those people who are watching.

I want to recognize my wife, Helen, who is one of the strongest supporters of this bill: Helen, thank you very much for your support.

I want to recognize some of the people who are here today. I'd like to start with someone I've known from the beginning of this, and that is Betty Cornelius. Betty is the founder of Cangrands National Kinship Support, and we have talked thousands of times. Thank you very much for coming down.

I also want to thank Darlene Hachey, who came from Windsor today. Darlene is with the CAW Local 444. As well, Brian Jacques, with Local 127—Brian and I talked many times, including at 1 or 2 or 3 in the morning; I remember those conversations. Thank you. And I'm not sure: Did Aaron get down with you? Aaron is president of CAW Local 127. I want to thank the CAW.

Just give me a couple of extra minutes; I know my time is going to expire.

I want to also thank Audrey Meikle and William Meikle, who are both grandparents, and Erma Emily Hoy, who is a great-great-grandparent. Thank you. And two last people—Mr. Speaker, thank you for your indulgence: Steve Watt and Phyllis Hoy.

Thank you, all of you, and thank you to all the grandparents for their support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has now expired.

CONDOMINIUM OWNERS PROTECTION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PROPRIÉTAIRES DE CONDOMINIUMS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item number 31, standing in the name of Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Marchese has moved second reading of Bill 79, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to condominiums.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?
Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'd like to refer it to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that it be referred to committee? So ordered.

ARTHUR WISHART AMENDMENT ACT (FRANCHISE DISCLOSURE), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI ARTHUR WISHART SUR LA DIVULGATION RELATIVE AUX FRANCHISES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 32.

Ms. Jaczek has moved second reading of Bill 102, An Act to amend the Arthur Wishart Act (Franchise Disclosure), 2000.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?
Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to refer this bill to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Agreed? So ordered.

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM
AMENDMENT ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT
LA LOI PORTANT RÉFORME
DU DROIT DE L'ENFANCE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 33.

Mr. Craitor has moved second reading of Bill 22, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I move that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy and be passed within two weeks.

Laughter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'm not sure I can order all of that, but it will be referred to committee.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day. Minister without portfolio.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Phillips has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30—

Mr. Kim Craitor: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Oh, I'm sorry. A point of order.

Mr. Kim Craitor: If I could just clarify, I threw in a couple of comments, and I just want to make sure that I didn't throw you off track. Did we take a vote on my bill to have it referred to standing committee? Did we pass it?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Yes, it was passed. It was ordered.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1631.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Simcoe–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC)	Richmond Hill York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R (LIB)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB) O'Toole, John (PC) Orazietti, David (LIB) Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB) Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB) Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre Durham Sault Ste. Marie Oshawa Kitchener–Conestoga Elgin–Middlesex–London Scarborough–Agincourt	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP) Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Beaches–East York Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) Ramal, Khalil (LIB) Ramsay, David (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Ruprecht, Tony (LIB) Sandals, Liz (LIB) Savoline, Joyce (PC) Sergio, Mario (LIB) Shurman, Peter (PC) Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord London–Fanshawe Timiskaming–Cochrane Northumberland–Quinte West Davenport Guelph Burlington York West / York-Ouest Thornhill Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB) Sousa, Charles (LIB) Sterling, Norman W. (PC) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Vaughan Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Carleton–Mississippi Mills Toronto–Danforth Mississauga–Erindale	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB) Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) Wilson, Jim (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex Perth–Wellington Simcoe–Grey	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB) Yakabuski, John (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Norm Miller, Yasir Naqvi
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Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
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France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
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la politique sociale**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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Second reading agreed to	2282
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**Children's Law Reform Amendment Act, 2010, Bill
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Monday 27 September 2010

Lundi 27 septembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 September 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 septembre 2010

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I would like to welcome the president of COCA, Ian Cunningham; David Zurawel; and all the members who came from across the province of Ontario to be with us here today for their second annual Queen's Park day.

As you know, COCA plays a pivotal role in our province, and they do an excellent job on behalf of all of us. They represent 30-plus organizations in this beautiful province.

Again, from myself, the Minister of Labour and the member from Brantford, welcome, COCA members. I want to invite all my colleagues to go to the reception this afternoon from 5 to 7.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Today, I want to take this opportunity to welcome the students, staff, teachers and volunteers from Cornell Junior Public School in the riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. They are here in the Legislature somewhere and will eventually make their way into the House.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd very much like to introduce the family of Lathiha Thillainadarajah. Thillai Sinnadurai is Lathiha's father, Rani Thillainadarajah is her mom and Asmitha Thillainadarajah is her sister.

I just want to say that I met Lathiha when she was six years old when I knocked on their door, and she has been paying attention to the Legislature ever since. It's just wonderful to have her here as a page.

Mr. Dave Levac: I know they've been introduced, but I would be remiss not to introduce the House to a former MPP for the city of Brantford, Ron Johnson, who is with us and represents COCA as well. Ron, welcome back.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm excited to introduce my good friend Paul Davidson, who is the executive director of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, and also dad to our page Tom. Welcome, Paul.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I just wanted to introduce the family of the extraordinary page Brandon Chan from the great riding of St. Paul's. His mom, Vivienne Ang, and his father, Eugene Chan, are in the gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of page Thomas Davidson and the member from Ottawa Centre,

we'd like to welcome Paul Davidson to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery a parliamentary delegation from the National Assembly of the Republic of Kenya, led by the Honourable Amina Abdalla. Please join me in welcoming our guests to the Legislature today. Welcome to Ontario.

We also have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the Kurdistan Regional Government, led by the Minister of Trade and Industry, His Excellency Sinan Chalabi. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests from Kurdistan. Welcome to Ontario.

I want to take this opportunity to thank members from all three sides for coming to Elgin county for the 2010 International Plowing Match. It was great to have you there. I want to take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge Duncan McPhail, the chairman, and the great team of individuals that he put together to put together such a great show. Again, thank you for coming to Elgin.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY WEBSITE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to advise members that, commencing today, the Legislative Assembly website will begin posting an eight-day rolling archive of the daily question period. Each day's question period will be posted to the site shortly after it is completed. This is important. Anyone can then watch question period for the current day and the preceding seven days on demand, whenever they wish, from their own computer.

I know this is an issue that has been dealt with in here, but given the fact that the two satellite TV carriers do not provide the Ontario parliamentary channel to their subscribers and the channel is increasingly difficult to find on digital cable systems, I feel that delivering the parliamentary proceedings on our own website is now a priority.

Further enhancements to the website are now being planned, but in the meantime, please let your constituents know that the eight-day archive of question period is now available to them directly from the Legislative Assembly website.

I thank the members. Many of you, I know, had input into this.

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much for extending that service. I should remind members that the streaming video portion online does not have an audio signal. I've had complaints from

constituents that the streaming portion of the video does not have an audio portion to it on many days, if not all days.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member for that. We've actually just gone to—one of the reasons we've been able to achieve this is that we actually have a new provider. I would just say to any of you that at any time, if you become aware of that, please let the Deputy Clerk know and we will have a look at that.

There being no further introductions it is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is for the Premier. I got into public life because I believe that Ontario families know what's best for their children, and they should have more money in their pockets to address their own families' priorities.

The Premier, though, thinks he has a more intelligent understanding of families than they do, and this sense of superiority was on full display during the Premier's Marie Antoinette moment this weekend, when he declared Saturday as laundry day for us common folk. Premier, how did you get so far out of touch?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the opportunity, and I want to thank my honourable colleague for raising an important issue once again, which is, how do we, working together, manage the development of our electricity system; how do we clean up our air; how do we invest in a new industry; and how do we help families manage the new costs associated with the assumption of those three important responsibilities? The point that I want to make—and I know that my friend, in fact, supports this—is that it's important that families understand there is a full discount period all day Saturday and all day Sunday when time-of-use rates are in effect. I just want to make sure that families are aware of that option.

Again, I would implore my colleague to join us as we assume our responsibilities to ensure that we have in place a reliable electricity system, cleaner air and a new industry in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I sure hope that families that weren't able to do their wash on the Premier's first provincial laundry day won't get a lecture from the nanny Premier and make sure they get it done next Saturday.

Premier McGuinty started in office by reversing income tax reductions that would benefit every family in Ontario. You scrapped property tax reductions for our seniors and then you brought in your so-called health tax that attacked Ontario's middle class. You have built a legacy of extra school fees and insurance premium hikes,

and now you're piling up the HST on eco taxes and taking more money from average Ontario families who are struggling to make ends meet.

Premier, why do you see Ontario families as bottomless ATMs for your expensive experiments?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: On the matter of the HST, I want to once again take this opportunity to thank so many Conservatives, both in Ottawa and the former leaders of the provincial Conservative Party, for their unrelenting support for this measure as part of a comprehensive package of tax reforms.

My friend says he's concerned about the financial challenges for our families today, and I think that's a legitimate concern. But I would ask him why it is, when we have put in place measures to reduce taxes for people by \$12 billion over three years, that he stands against that? Why does he oppose our personal income tax cut benefiting 93% of Ontarians? Why does he oppose our new sales tax credit of \$260 each for adults and children, and our transition benefit of \$1,000 for families and \$300 for individuals? Every time we move to lend support to families, we don't get the support we think we should from the opposite party.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you've raised taxes. You've cost this province jobs, and families are looking for change. You brought in a so-called health tax increase that costs a typical middle-class family up to \$900 a year. Income and property taxes have gone up. But Premier McGuinty thinks that families can pay even more for his expensive experiments. Your HST tax grab will cost middle-class families up to \$1,000 a year more, and then you go out and nickel and dime families every time they turn around, including your eco tax grab on 9,000 items that families use each and every day, from bath toys for their kids to suntan lotion.

When is enough enough? When will you call an end to your attack on families' pocketbooks and give needed relief to hard-working average families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I understand that my colleague is exclusively focused on some of the financial challenges that affect our families, and we are very much concerned about those costs. That's why we've moved forward on so many different fronts to put in place new financial supports for our families, including personal income tax cuts.

But beyond that, I think we bring a more holistic view to the concerns of Ontario families. That's why we will continue to find ways to invest in their schools and to ensure that students are demonstrating increased academic achievement. That's why we'll continue to find a way to invest in our hospitals, with more doctors and nurses, more technologies and more drugs. That's why we'll continue to find a way to invest in the development of new industries in the province of Ontario, whether that's clean water or clean air industries.

My sense is that families want us to look at their costs but they also want us to look at their public service and the strength of their economy.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, I am proud to stand on the side of hard-working Ontario families whose pocketbooks are under constant attack by the Dalton McGuinty government. We will work—

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Dalton McGuinty government, Speaker—I did say that. I'm being very careful—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just would be cautious. Thank you.

Mr. Tim Hudak: We are on the side of families who need tax relief, who are struggling just to tread water, to keep up with your constant attack on their pocketbooks: income and property tax increases, HST, eco tax grab.

What do we see from the Premier? What are the Premier's priorities? Expensive energy experiments like smart meters; sex ed classes for six-year-olds; putting cellphones in classrooms across the province; and now, declaring Saturday Provincial Laundry Day.

Premier, enough is enough. How do you think families can pay 732 bucks more a year just for your hydro increases alone?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague of something that our Environmental Commissioner said: "There's a lot of exaggerated claims that 'prices are going through the roof.' And I am worried this is going to trump environmental concerns, and sacrifice long-term benefits for short-term political ... gains."

There's an important distinction to be drawn between a rant and the assumption of responsibilities. On this side of the House we're taking on important responsibilities. When it comes to our electricity plan we're trying to do three things at the same time:

(1) We want to put in place a reliable electricity system.

(2) We want to clean up the quality of our air, and I think families are very concerned about that.

(3) We are laying the foundation for a new industry. It's an exciting industry. It's a clean industry. It has to do with clean electricity.

It's a difficult responsibility to assume. We're taking it on. We know there are costs connected with that. We want to continue to work with our families to help them manage those costs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Quite frankly, based on that answer, while the Premier wants Ontario families to do their laundry on Saturdays, the McGuinty government is on spin cycle seven days a week.

Premier, you just don't get it. You just don't understand. If you sat down with a family in Ottawa; in Toronto, where you live; wherever in the province, you know that they leave the hydro bill on the kitchen table for days

and days on end because they only know it's going in one direction: up and up and up.

This fall you've targeted families' wallets with eco taxes, your smart meter tax machines, new taxes and fees for hydro. You've taken thousands of dollars out of the pockets of middle-class families, and all you offered was an insulting \$50 tax credit.

Premier, are you so out of touch that you don't understand that families are treading water today just to make ends meet?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think there's an important distinction to be drawn here between a rant and responsibility.

I want to remind Ontarians where we were. In 2003 we were barely able to keep the lights on. There was a desperate and dangerous shortage of electricity in the province of Ontario. There were brownouts, and we are at risk of a major blackout.

The opposition party has, as the fundamental tenet of its plan to modernize electricity, to put, into the downtown core of our cities, diesel generators. I think that is irresponsible.

We are investing billions of dollars in new generation, billions of dollars in new transmission. We are building a modern, reliable, clean electricity system. It has the added benefit at the same time of putting in place the foundation for a new industry in Ontario, creating up to 50,000 clean, green jobs. That is something that I would argue is very important to Ontario families.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's not helpful, the member from Durham interjecting. I can close my eyes and I know your names.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: When I look across the aisle, I see a team of McGuinty Liberals who sat on their hands, who said nothing when their out-of-touch leader surprised families on the day that they brought in the HST with an eco tax grab on 9,000 items families use each and every day.

1050

Premier, things have become so bad with your attack on the pocketbooks of ordinary hard-working families that even the NDP has joined our cause to fight for lower taxes for families, to give them a break, to give them some kind of tax relief. Standing with me are a group of Ontario PCs who get it, who will fight for families and give them the break they need, a chance to catch up and a chance to create jobs in the province of Ontario once again.

You don't get it; we do. We'll stand up, defend the family pocketbook, deliver real relief for families who need it today and create jobs in the province of Ontario. Why don't you get it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I just believe my honourable colleague has a decidedly simplistic view of

Ontario families and their concerns. Not only are they concerned about household expenses—and that is very a real and legitimate concern—but they're also concerned about the quality of their schools. They remember what happened on their watch to our schools. They're not eager to go back there. They're sick and tired of the bickering and infighting that prevailed at that time when it came to public education in the province of Ontario.

They are also very concerned about the quality of health care and getting access to that good-quality health care for everyone in their families. They don't want to go back to where we were when they fired nurses, shut hospitals and shut down hospital beds.

They're also concerned about the quality of their environment. They don't want to go back to those days when they cut the Ministry of the Environment in half and laid off water inspectors and meat inspectors. They want to keep moving forward; they don't want to go back.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Over the last month, we've been telling the stories of people across Ontario who are simply overwhelmed by their rising electricity costs. As their bills have climbed, the Premier has dismissed their concerns. My question is a simple one: Why doesn't the Premier think people deserve some relief?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're going to continue to work hard with our families to help them manage these costs. What I will tell you is that we're not going to go back to a time when our electricity system was characterized as being weak, unreliable and dirty.

Again, I want to remind my honourable colleague of something said by the Environmental Commissioner. He said, "There's a lot of exaggerated claims that 'prices are going through the roof.' And I am worried this is going to trump environmental concerns, and sacrifice long-term benefits for short-term political ... gains." I would advise my honourable colleague to pay close attention to those words of good advice.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Over the last month, the Premier has tried to defend the indefensible: sweetheart private power deals that charge people for power they don't even use; a \$240-million giveaway to hydro companies; and so-called smart meters that don't conserve energy, don't help people conserve energy and, in fact, drive their costs up. Why is the Premier forcing people to pay an unfair sales tax on top of this mess?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to quote something that the Environmental Commissioner said about smart meters and time-of-use rates. He said, time of use "is about saving future costs for Ontarians, rather than"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order—on both sides.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As I was saying, the Environmental Commissioner said the following about smart meters and time-of-use rates: "Additionally, TOU is about saving future costs for Ontarians, rather than present costs. By reducing peak demand (which should come about through customers' response to time-of-use prices), we avoid having to build more power plants and transmission lines."

What we're doing is taking on an important responsibility. We know that families take it as their responsibility to manage their costs, but one of the things they look to us to do is ensure that, when they flick on the switch, the lights turn on. They want to make sure there is electricity there for our families, for our businesses, for our schools and for our hospitals—clean, reliable, strong electricity systems. That's what we will continue to build.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The HST isn't keeping the lights on and it's not cleaning our air; it's just taking money out of people's pockets and handing it out as a massive corporate tax giveaway.

Now, if this Premier can find \$1.5 billion for smart meters, \$2 billion a year for a corporate tax giveaway and millions for skyrocketing CEO salaries, why, oh why, can't he find the money to take the HST off our hydro bills?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, my honourable colleague refuses to recognize the \$12 billion in tax cuts that we're putting in place over the course of three years for our families. She refuses to acknowledge that. Fortunately, that was acknowledged by important institutions like the Daily Bread Food Bank and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which said that taken as a whole, including the HST on electricity costs, our package of tax reforms will put low-income families in a better position; it will leave middle-income families in the same place; and our highest-income families will be a little bit worse off. We think that's fair. We think it's responsible. It's all about building a stronger economy and a stronger, more reliable, cleaner electricity system.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. Seven years of the McGuinty Liberals have left families afraid—literally afraid—to open their hydro bills. Cherie Perks from Ayton writes, "I am terrified I may have to sell the home I built, raised my children in and have lived in for 28 years because of the hydro rates and the HST on those rates.... Our bill was nearly \$200 ... then add the HST on top of that, well ... it scares me half to death!"

Why won't the Premier take the HST off hydro bills and help Ms. Perks and Ontarians like her?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to acknowledge that Ontario families are very concerned about

mounting costs to their households coming on a number of fronts, and I know they're concerned about mounting costs associated with their electricity bills. That's understandable. We're very much aware of that and very much share that concern. On the other side of this, I know that my honourable colleague, at some point in time, is going to want to speak to this in a responsible way.

We have to build a modern, strong, clean reliable electricity system in the province of Ontario. We can't go back to the days when the plan, which would have been laughable except for the fact it was dangerous, was to put diesel generators in place in the downtown cores of our cities. We think that is unacceptable. We think we have to continue to invest, and you would think as well that my honourable colleague would support our plan to put in place clean, green, electricity for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: From smart meters to the HST to paying for higher profit margins and nuclear power we don't use, family budgets are being squeezed. Anna Mikicinski from London says that her utility bills are over \$600, and writes, "The cost of living is outrageous, and something needs to be done about it. If only wages went up as much as utility prices.... I need help with the monthly bills...."

Why won't the Premier make life more affordable and take the HST off hydro bills?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague says she is concerned about mounting costs for families, but I have a hard time believing that. Because, when we cut personal income taxes for 93% of Ontarians, she voted against that. When we put in place a \$1,000 transition benefit for families, she voted against that. When we put in place a new sales tax credit—\$260 each for adults and children—she voted against that. When we doubled our senior homeowners' property tax grant from \$250 to \$500, she voted against that. When we put in place our new Ontario child benefit, the first of its kind in the country—it's now \$1,100 per child—she voted against that. We're proposing to move ahead with a children's fitness tax credit—\$50 per child. I suspect—maybe I'm wrong—that she is going to vote against that. Every single time we come to the fore and put in place new financial supports for Ontario families, the NDP continues to vote against those measures. So, I don't believe her when she says she wants to help families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: New Democrats are proud to have voted against the ongoing failures of this government.

The Premier's hydro policies have made people's lives more expensive—period. Gail Murphy from Windsor writes: "With the recent HST added to my hydro bill, my monthly budget payment is not sufficient to cover my yearly billings, and now I have to pay an additional \$150.... I hoped to live as many of the remaining years of

my life as possible in my ... home. I now find that I may have to sell my home...."

Ms. Murphy needs some help getting by, Premier, like so many other Ontarians. Why will the Premier not take the HST off of her hydro bill?

1100

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I would recommend to my honourable colleague a report put out by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. It is very thorough. It is objective. It takes a look at our comprehensive package of tax reforms in the province of Ontario, including our \$12 billion in cuts for people over the course of the next three years. The conclusion of that report is found in the title itself: Not a Tax Grab After All. It makes perfectly clear that when you take everything into account, all things into consideration in terms of our tax reforms, low-income families come out ahead, middle-income families remain at the same level, and when it comes to our highest-income families, they come out a little bit behind.

We think it's fair and responsible. Again, it's all about building a stronger economy. Our families want jobs; they want cleaner air; they want the foundation for new industry, and that's clean, green electricity. That's what our plan is all about, Speaker. It may be that they have a plan, but I have yet to hear of it.

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to my friend opposite, the Premier. Premier McGuinty's health tax takes about \$900 a year from the pockets of middle-class families. His hydro increases are making them pay \$732 more per year.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: His income tax and property tax increases over the past seven years have made Ontario families pay several thousand more dollars a year. And his HST is making a typical middle-class family pay over \$1,041 a year.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Is there any wonder why the mention of his name has Ontario families hiding their wallets?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I appreciate the question. I didn't really appreciate the background graphics that were associated with it.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That's some wonderful, creative technicolour fiction, which is always a source of interest and amusement, but let's stick to the facts. Here are the facts: We are cutting personal income taxes for 93% of Ontarians. It works out to \$200 a year per person—that's permanent. There is a transition benefit for our tax reforms. Families will receive \$1,000; individuals, \$300.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: They voted against that, Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: They voted against that as well.

Our new sales tax credit: \$260 each for adults and children—that will benefit nearly three million Ontarians. They voted against that as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Premier just doesn't get it. That's probably why 30 members of his caucus didn't show up today, because he just doesn't get—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I really do appreciate all the armchair Speakers that are here trying to assist me, but there is only one Speaker and it is me. If you would like to come up and sit here some time, I think it would be very good for each and every one of you to come and spend some time in this chair. But there is one Speaker and it's me, and I don't need the assistance of others.

I just will remind the honourable member that we do have an understanding within this place that, notwithstanding that she spoke to a number of absences without anybody specific, we don't know why any individual member may or may not be here and it's just best we don't do that.

Please continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think it was just a critical mass that has us concerned on this side.

But the Premier says he's got plans. He says he's—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Economic Development, do you want to trade seats?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Even veiled references.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Premier says he's got a plan. He's got a long-term energy plan, an HST job plan, but there's no point in asking for specifics over there, like when the first 60,000 families will see the jobs that he said the HST will create. The former revenue minister said, "Most of them have already been created." The current minister is no better. She stuck with the same talking points when 36,000 jobs were lost.

My question for the Premier is: Are you so out of touch that you don't understand that taxes should be going down while jobs should be going up?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Lots of enthusiasm, lots of excitement and lots of energy, but not a lot of specifics. But for the benefit of Ontarians, I will speak to one specific put forward by the official opposition to this point in time, because there is a dearth of specificity when it comes to their plans.

They're going to take \$3 billion out of health care. That's going to be one of their cuts. They're going to take \$3 billion out of health care. I want you to imagine

how many thousands of nurses that will require that we lay off in the province of Ontario. I want you to ask yourself how many hospital beds will have to be closed as a result of that. I want you to think of the increased wait times as a result of the lack of access to human resources and technologies available to Ontarians that are associated with their tax cuts. I think it's important that we remain somewhat sober-minded as we consider their reckless plans to cut taxes.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I say to the honourable member from Nepean-Carleton and the government House leader that if you want to have a cross-floor discussion about issues that are important to you, please take it outside the chamber.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You could throw both of them out.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Perhaps the honourable member from Welland wants to sit in the chair.

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Howard Hampton: A question for the Premier. Families in northwestern Ontario are being squeezed by skyrocketing hydro bills. Mary Ellen Cooper from Thunder Bay writes: "We are going to be hurt—big time—with the HST.... My pension hardly covers my expenses. When is McGuinty going to open his door and look at the hungry people of this province, of the city of Thunder Bay where the mills are closed and" people "are out of work? Where families have lost everything. It is time McGuinty gave his head a shake"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I remind the honourable member—notwithstanding the fact that he is quoting from a letter—of my previous comments about making reference to offices and not names. Please continue.

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question: What is the Premier going to do to make life affordable for northerners like Mary Ellen Cooper?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We understand that northern residents in Ontario, and all residents of Ontario, are working hard as we come through this challenging time, as our economy begins to build, and they have been through a tough time. Rising energy costs are something that those families are working through.

In recognition of that, in our last budget we brought forward the northern Ontario energy tax credit. I believe that will assist about half of the residents of northern Ontario, creating a permanent annual credit of up to \$130 per person, \$200 per family. The NDP didn't support that.

The northern industrial electricity rate program is moving through the north, creating jobs in the north and helping to make the energy rates more competitive for northern businesses. That's going to help families by creating jobs.

Our new energy and property tax credit—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: Well, the Premier needs to know that his so-called northern energy credit isn't covering the one-month increase in people's hydro bills, never mind the other 11 months.

Jim Hill, a constituent, writes: "I am an old-age pensioner. My hydro bills have been too high for my budget. But now with the HST they are so high that they consume my grocery funds. I no longer can shop for the month and am getting pretty hungry eating ... bread and margarine...." New Democrats believe we can make life more affordable for people like Jim Hill by taking the HST off the hydro bill.

My question: Why won't the Premier give families a break by taking the HST off the hydro bill?

1110

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I said earlier, we get it. We understand the challenges facing Ontario families. That's why, today, Minister Duncan and Minister Bartolucci are in Sudbury talking about our northern Ontario credit and northern industrial rates that are going to assist northern Ontario families in dealing with these challenges.

But one of the challenges we have here in this province is that the NDP do not support our efforts to move forward and build a stronger economy in the north by investing in northern energy projects. I was recently up in Kapuskasing, where I was joined by your colleague Gilles Bisson as we celebrated the 600 jobs being—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would remind the honourable member that we don't refer to members' names; we refer to ridings or titles.

Hon. Brad Duguid: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I believe it's Timmins—James Bay. We were just up together in Kapuskasing, celebrating the Lower Mattagami project creating 600 jobs in the north—a partnership with First Nations communities.

We are building energy projects for the north. We're creating jobs in the north. The NDP do not—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. In my riding, we're served by the Mississauga Halton Local Health Integration Network. We know that these networks are vital in assessing the needs of our local communities, and the results in my riding have been very impressive.

When my constituents ask about the health improvements we've made in Mississauga South, it's with pleasure that I mention our very good working relationship with the LHIN. I meet with them regularly, and they're always eager to assist my staff and my community.

I have recently been informed that the Mississauga Halton LHIN has been nominated for a prestigious

award, a health award. Could the minister please inform the House about this award and what it means to my constituents?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Mississauga South for the question, and also congratulations and happy birthday to the member.

The member is absolutely right: The Mississauga Halton LHIN has just been nominated for a very prestigious international award, the Bertelsmann Foundation's 2011 Reinhard Mohn Prize for vitalizing democracy. The LHIN has been recognized for groundbreaking projects that promote civic engagement and community participation in their health care planning process. Last year, the Mississauga Halton LHIN conducted an innovative and extensive community engagement exercise that included a citizens' reference panel as part of its integrated health service plan refresh process.

Some in this House want to silence the voice of community members when it comes to planning—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Charles Sousa: This is wonderful news. To be recognized for a prestigious award is a testament to the hard work the Mississauga Halton LHIN has done for the community.

My constituents are always curious to know what our government has been doing to improve health care in this province as well as in my riding. We know that our LHINs play an integral role in providing our communities with important patient-based care. Would the minister tell my constituents and this House about the Mississauga Halton LHIN's accomplishments in providing care for our communities?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very proud of the work that our LHINs are doing to provide important patient-based care in our communities. Let me illustrate by telling you one story.

There's a program in the Mississauga Halton LHIN; it's called Seniors Enjoy Nurturing Activities Companionship Achievements, SENACA. It's a program that focuses on helping seniors lead active lifestyles when they are aging at home.

I want to read from a letter that one family member wrote about this program. She said, "I am convinced that the mental and physical stimulation provided by SENACA is holding back the onset of Parkinson's disease" that her mother suffers from. "Without the SENACA program during the day, my mother would be unable to remain at home with the ones she loves in an environment that is familiar and comfortable."

This is just one of thousands of examples of the LHIN doing the work they do—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Premier—and I'm extremely serious in asking this. Premier

McGuinty showed how out of touch he's become with Ontario families when he said that anyone looking for a break on their hydro bills should do their laundry on Saturday. Can Premier McGuinty tell my Thornhill constituents whether to do laundry before or after synagogue on the Sabbath?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's pretty obvious that the opposition do not support conservation. They didn't put it in place when they were in power; they had no conservation then. Now that we're building up conservation, about to receive an A-plus from the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance—today, in fact, we'll be awarded that—where their mark for that government was a C-minus—it's very obvious they don't support it, but there was a time when they did.

I have a report here called Energy for the Future. I believe I'm going to have to deal with this in the supplementary, and I will. I'm looking forward to sharing this with the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: That minister's insensitivity is absolutely incredible, as evidenced by that answer. That minister and Premier McGuinty just don't get it. Manufacturers are balking at the expensive hydro and high taxes. They're walking from the province and they're taking high-paying jobs with them.

Premier McGuinty talks about 500 jobs at a solar plant. Ontario families—36,000 of them since the HST came into effect—talk about how to keep the lights on now that their jobs are gone.

Can't you do better for Ontario families and businesses than to ask, "Will the last one to leave please turn out the lights?"

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I said, they didn't get it when they were in power and they don't get it now. It's time for us to work together. This isn't just about government policy; this is about embracing a culture of conservation across this province. Every Ontario family and business is part of this.

The funny thing is, I have in my hand a copy of the Energy for the Future report. In this report it says this: "We have to invest in conservation—to offset demand. We have to invest in demand management—to shift peaks in consumption to off-hours." This report was prepared by the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party. The task force that put it together was chaired by John Yakabuski. Norm Sterling and John O'Toole played a part in this task force—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Speaker is standing. Once again, I will remind the honourable member that we do not refer to individuals' names; it is ridings or titles. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. The greater Toronto area isn't immune to the economic

slowdown either. Families are struggling to make ends meet, but this government's hydro policies have made things worse for all of them.

Kelly Lynch from Oakville writes: "I received my hydro bill and it was \$800. I had just paid two months ago \$652 ... Help me!"

Rhoda Crisp writes: "I'm on a fixed income ... The hydro is supposed to increase by 10% ... It is way beyond my means."

People like Ms. Lynch and Ms. Crisp deserve an answer from this Premier. When will he make their lives more affordable?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We said earlier today, and will continue to say this: We get it. We understand that it's not easy for Ontario families to deal with increasing energy rates, but the fact is that these are important investments for those very same families.

Ontario families deserve an energy system they can count on. They deserve to know that when they turn on the lights, there's going to be enough energy in this province to provide them with the power they need to lead their lives and to run their businesses. These are important investments.

There was a time when the NDP talked about supporting these investments, but when push comes to shove, the NDP just does not have the courage to stand up to their convictions and does not have the courage to stand by the important decisions that must be made to ensure that we have a strong, reliable and clean system of energy to ensure that each and every family in this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: I only wish this minister had the courage to do what was right. Across the GTA, people are trying to save. Bill Wilkinson says, "We have been maniacal about turning off lights, doing laundry late at night, using a toaster oven rather than the stove oven, and the bill keeps going up!"

Rhae Jaworski says this: "I am frugal with my own personal budget and was shocked and outraged at the amount of money owing to hydro on this month's hydro bill: \$375, including over \$40 HST." She asks, "How can a family of three in a modest home with light dimmers, following the 'peak saver' schedule, be charged such an exorbitant amount of money?"

There is a way, Mr. Premier, to provide Mr. Wilkinson and Ms. Jaworski with immediate relief: Remove the HST from hydro. Why won't the government agree?

1120

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're working very hard with Ontario families to transform our energy system which, when we inherited it, was weak. It was unreliable and it was dirty. It was relying on dirty coal, polluting our air and impacting the health of our kids.

We need to do better than that. We're committed to doing better than that. The opposition clearly is not willing to make the decisions that we need to make to modernize our energy infrastructure; to give Ontario families

and businesses a modern, a more reliable, a stronger energy system that's going to lead us into a future that's going to be healthier for our kids and that's going to have cleaner air.

This is something that each and every one of us in this province should be behind. It's obvious the opposition and the third party do not support this, do not support a stronger, more reliable and cleaner energy system. As the Premier—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Speaker, through you, my question is for the Minister of Revenue. Families in my riding have been hit hard by the global economic recession. They've been telling me that sometimes it is a challenge to raise a family in this environment. They have been contacting my constituency office and asking for my assistance on ways to help them provide for their families and find jobs. Good jobs for the people of Ontario is one of the most important things this government can do to help people provide for their families.

Can the minister tell this House what the government is doing to help Ontarians like my constituents in Oak Ridges—Markham provide for their families?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I thank my colleague from Oak Ridges—Markham for the chance to talk about the McGuinty government's plan for families, and that is called the Open Ontario plan. It is an exciting plan and it's about helping families in Ontario. We're doing that with two things: First, we're creating jobs and second, we're cutting taxes. Just last week, the Conference Board of Canada predicted Toronto would see economic growth of 4.7% this year, followed closely by my own city of Hamilton with 4.5% growth.

Over the next 10 years, our comprehensive tax reform package is about bringing \$47 billion of investment and creating almost 600,000 new jobs. We're creating jobs for Ontario families. We will continue creating jobs for Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm glad to hear the government is working hard to make it easier for families in Ontario. Making the economy more competitive and creating jobs for families across the province are important initiatives.

Perhaps the minister could also share how tax exemptions, tax credits and transitional cheques also help Ontarians provide for their families. I know that our government has a plan to help families during this difficult time. Can the minister speak more about this plan to strengthen the economy and create more jobs for families, especially low-income families, across this province?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: The second way we are helping Ontario families is by cutting taxes. In fact, nine of every 10 Ontarians will pay less income tax this year. Our Ontario sales tax credit will provide families with up to \$260 every year for every family member, and fam-

ilies that are earning less than \$160,000 will receive a transition cheque totalling \$1,000.

Our reforms support families, especially lower- and middle-income families. That's why there's a great deal of support for our programs among people who advocate for lower-income Ontarians.

So the real question is, why do our critics continue to oppose our reforms? Why don't they want us to create jobs and why don't they want to help Ontario families?

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: My question is for the Premier. Premier, last week during question period and in estimates, your finance minister said that the Nortel pensioners' financial sponsorship model proposal would require a change in the federal Income Tax Act. Also last week, in a letter to Nortel's pensioners group, your minister listed the need for changes to the federal Income Tax Act as a reason for turning down their proposal.

Has your minister or government approached the federal government to find out whether the federal government would be willing to make the changes on behalf of the Nortel pensioners group?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I don't have the answer to that, but I will certainly undertake to provide that answer for my colleague.

What I can say is that I had the opportunity just last week to meet with some representatives of Nortel to sit down and converse with them directly. They took the opportunity, as they should have, to rightly impress upon me just how important an issue this is to them. They would like to exercise greater authority over the pension plan itself.

Together with the Minister of Finance, I met with those individuals. I undertook to give this yet another review and to get back to them, and that's where we are right now.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Premier, given your minister's statement in estimates, I wrote to the federal Minister of Finance, Mr. Flaherty. I ask a page to deliver a copy of his response to you. The salient point in the final paragraph says, "If the Ontario government decided to pursue such"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. The Attorney General.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: The salient point in the final paragraph says, "If the Ontario government decided to pursue such an initiative and approached the federal government with a detailed proposal, which they have not yet done, the government of Canada would naturally be willing to support Nortel pensioners and the province of Ontario through expedient implementation of all reasonable proposed policy measures."

Premier, will you now bring legislation forward in this Legislature for the Nortel pensioners plan to continue under the financial sponsorship—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleague recognizes that there is not a consensus among the pensioners. There is differing opinion in terms of what we need to do with respect to the future of their pension plan, and that's something that we feel we have a responsibility to take into account.

Again, I will say to my honourable colleague that I did have a chance to meet with some representatives from Nortel, together with the Minister of Finance. I have undertaken to give this a second review. I know that my office will be speaking with representatives again.

We want to be thoughtful; we want to be responsible. We want to make sure we take into account all the pensioners and their concerns, to ensure that they have the best possible pension plan there for them in the future. It's an important element, security of mind.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Families are being squeezed by skyrocketing hydro costs. They need a break.

Bob Kerr from Hamilton lives on CPP and a part-time job, earning \$800 a month. Bob will suffer an additional \$65 a month in HST expenses. He will fall further and further behind in his quality of life because of your flawed HST scheme. What solutions does the Premier have to make Mr. Kerr's cost-of-living expenses go away?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for the question and for bringing the gentleman's situation to our attention.

We are working very hard to ensure that those in our society who are less fortunate than others have access to a number of forms of assistance. Just today we have our Minister of Finance up in Sudbury with Minister Bartolucci, talking about—and, I expect, making an announcement—providing assistance to lower- and middle-income Ontarians in terms of the energy and property tax credit. That's going to be of help. We have our senior homeowners' property tax grant as well, which we've doubled to provide help for seniors and those with lower income.

I recently issued a letter to the Ontario Energy Board requesting it to resume work on its province-wide strategy to help low-income consumers manage costs.

We recognize that low-income consumers are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Minister, Shelly from St. Catharines has an autistic son who's afraid of darkness. She says, "With this hydro increase it's hard for us financially.

How do you expect us to provide for our children? We're cutting into our food budget" as it is, "it never ends."

New Democrats proposed a plan today to take the HST off hydro and make life a little more affordable. Why won't the Premier give families like Bob's and Shelly's a break and take the HST off hydro?

1130

Hon. Brad Duguid: I guess the question I have is, if the NDP are so concerned about assisting lower-income people, why did you not support the property and energy tax credit that we brought forward that's going to help low- and middle-income people address some of their challenges with regard to energy costs? Why did you not support the seniors' property tax grant that we've doubled—\$500 to help seniors on fixed income? Why did you not support the tax cuts that were brought forward in the last budget, the tax cuts to the tune of helping Ontario families in and around \$200 per family? If the NDP really cared about those families, if the NDP really cared about helping lower- and middle-income Ontarians, they would have supported those initiatives.

Their goal is to try to make political hay out of these issues. Our goal is to help those families—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Our government has passed legislation to make Ontario fully accessible by 2025. My riding of Essex not only has people who require accessible services, but it's important for tourists who visit my riding to be offered accessible services by businesses.

Minister, what are the economic benefits of accessibility for Ontario and, more specifically, what are the economic benefits of tourism for businesses that provide accessible services?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'd like to thank the member from Essex. He's a great voice for the people of his riding.

By removing barriers and offering great customer service, organizations are opening their businesses to people of all abilities. In fact, our customer service standard is now law. As our population ages, the number of Ontarians with disabilities will increase to one in five. Persons with disabilities have \$25 billion in spending power nationally. Accommodating the needs of all Ontarians makes good business sense.

According to the Martin Prosperity Institute, Ontario's accessibility legislation has the potential to increase tourist expenditures in Ontario by between \$400 million and \$1.6 billion in five years and could help Ontario become a destination of choice for tourists with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: In Ontario, it clearly makes good business sense to ensure businesses are accessible. I

understand that time is needed for businesses to adapt to new accessibility standards as they are developed and implemented. However, there are some businesses and organizations that choose to lead by example. Could the minister outline an example that Ontarians can look to?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: As the former Minister of Culture, I'm very pleased to give you the example of the standards of the Stratford Festival, which I recently had the opportunity to visit. Some accessibility features include accessible parking and automatic doors; a barrier-free box office; accessible washrooms and elevators; hearing-assisted devices for performances; Braille programs; accessible seats in good locations; accessible bus travel from Toronto to Kitchener; and helpful staff who have been trained to assist patrons with all levels of abilities. There is also a production interpreted in sign language every other year. This is one of many accessibility success stories that Ontarians can view on my ministry website.

I invite all Ontarians and Canadians to visit the Stratford Festival every year, because they're fully accessible.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. As you know, Minister, the Family Responsibility Office is the most complained-about government agency, primarily because one third of support payers are in arrears.

Will you explain why HST cheques mailed out this summer were not redirected to parents raising their children and not receiving their court-ordered support?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you to this member for her concern with regard to people and children who need support from their parents.

I know that with the Family Responsibility Office there has been a lot of work done to improve services and there is much more work to do because when we took over—and that party was in power—the place was a mess. There were complaints and complaints. So we did a lot to improve the services and now, I can just evaluate by the complaints that I have, there are less and less complaints.

I want to make sure that every child receives the money that they should receive from the supporting parents to have a good life.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, the Family Responsibility Office is still the most number one complaint agency of the government. You've done nothing to improve that.

My question relates to HST cheques. Why did you not pass a regulation that would ensure HST cheques could be redirected to the children and families who are waiting for the support-ordered arrears? You guys love passing regulations. This is actually one that makes sense. Will you ensure that the following two HST cheques are redirected to families and children in need?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'll ask the Minister of Revenue to answer the question.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I thank the member very much for that question because it is a very important issue. What I can say is that the Family Responsibility Office is fully committed to collecting support payments owed to the families, but it's also very important for the member to understand that FRO does not have the authority to garnish the Ontario sales tax transition benefit payments.

Having said that, I will tell you that we have been looking at this. This is an extremely important question, and the Ministry of Finance is definitely looking into it.

LYME DISEASE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Lyme disease patients and their families have gathered today outside of this Legislature. They want the government to know about the severe challenges they face in accessing reliable testing and effective treatments for their debilitating illness. Increasingly, Lyme disease patients are forced to seek medical treatment outside of this province.

What action will the minister take to address these issues and ensure that these patients no longer feel abandoned by their government and the health care system of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of course, this is an issue that we're following very closely. The fact that people are going out of country to get the care they need is one that is just not acceptable to us.

We did launch an education campaign regarding Lyme disease in June. I want to assure the member opposite that we monitor very closely people leaving the province to get the care they need. We've made tremendous strides. We've enormously reduced the number of people requiring bariatric surgery, for example. They are now having that procedure done here. We do monitor it closely, and we are always looking at how we need to strengthen the health care system here.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Lyme disease patients and their families have been to Queen's Park before. They have demonstrated. They have organized petition campaigns. They have done everything they could to get the attention of the minister to focus on helping the people living with Lyme disease. People suffering from Lyme disease feel completely abandoned.

When will the minister ensure that people suffering from Lyme disease get the treatment they need and deserve in this province? They would like to know when.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the first question, this is an issue that we are taking very seriously. We are working with public health units across the province to conduct human and tick surveillance to identify new areas of risk. We've provided the public health units with information on how to prevent and control the disease.

We will continue to work with our public health units and inform them of any new information.

We do have a public education campaign under way to increase Lyme disease awareness. It is targeting the public and health care providers. The name of the program is Let's Target Lyme, and the website is www.ontario.ca/lyme. I would encourage people to educate themselves on this particular condition. As I say, we are continuing to work on this issue.

PESTICIDES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, our children are our greatest natural resource and we need to give them every chance to develop and succeed. Giving them the tools to succeed is half the equation. We also need to protect them from things that could negatively impact their health, especially toxic chemicals.

Parents in my riding of Ottawa—Orléans were pleased when we passed the cosmetic pesticides ban but were concerned about companies respecting the ban because they knew it would not be successful without support from business.

Minister, what is the McGuinty government doing to ensure that retailers and lawn care companies are adhering to the ban?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I thank my colleague for the question. I can say that in April of this year, exactly one year after the Ontario cosmetic pesticide ban took effect, my ministry did an audit. I can report to the House that I have some very good news for our families both in your riding, as I say to my friend, and across Ontario. Some 80% of the 341 retailers and lawn care companies inspected are in full compliance with the new laws one year later. I can assure the House that we will not rest until that is 100%.

Particularly, I can say that we have also done some studies about whether these chemicals are getting into our water supply, and I can advise the House that of the three toxic chemicals most commonly found in those pesticides, a year after the ban they have dropped substantially: a staggering 78%, 82%, and 86%, respectively. It shows that this ban is being respected, it is being used, and we will continue to get to 100% compliance.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no deferred votes, the time for question period has ended. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I would like to acknowledge that today is Durham Day, and I just want to mention a few people who will be here shortly: Mayor Bob Shepherd and Mayor Jim Abernethy, along with regional chair Roger Anderson and all the mayors of Durham. I should be mentioning them all, in fairness: Pat Perkins, Larry

O'Connor, Marilyn Pearce, John Gray and Steve Parish, all of whom were here today, along with Dave Ryan, to celebrate Durham Day. I'll have more to say about that in my statement.

LEGISLATIVE INTERNS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery the 2010-11 Ontario legislative interns: Bryan Bossin, Melissa Cernigoy, Natalie Desimini, Tom Maidwell, Katherine Preiss, Erica Rayment, Michael Smith, Charles Thompson, Sasha Tregebov and Lisa Marie Williams. Please join me in warmly welcoming them all to the Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DURHAM DAY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm proud to recognize Durham Day here at Queen's Park today. I would also like to acknowledge, of course, some of the mayors and the regional chair who I had just mentioned in my opening remarks and introductions.

I'd also like to thank and to mention some of the people who aren't in political office but do provide some of the wonderful infrastructure in Durham, like Judith Robinson, who's the vice-president of Durham College; Dr. Ron Bordessa, who's the president of the university; and Jacquie Hoornweg, who's chair of the Durham Strategic Energy Alliance, a very important part of making Durham a centre of excellence in energy.

Durham region is the powerhouse of Ontario, producing more than 30% of the province's electricity at Darlington and Pickering in my riding of Durham, as well as Wayne Arthurs's riding.

The power of Durham also comes from innovation—I like to think of Wayne Conrad, who is here today, when I think of innovation—and excellence represented by General Motors and many other manufacturers. Phil Petsinis was here from General Motors. Manufacturing and small business were represented very capably by Sheila Hall from the Clarington Board of Trade, as well as Bill and Paula Lishman, very well known internationally for their work in Fly Away Home and other production things.

In tourism, for example, I like to think of all of the things to be offered in the greenbelt etc. I'd like to thank Karen Yellowlees from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, representing the voice of agriculture.

Durham region is an innovative community taking pride in its past and looks forward to the future with confidence. We're also proud to be stewards of an outstanding natural environment of farmland, lakes, rivers, forests—especially the Oak Ridges moraine.

When I think of Durham region, I asked the Premier today whether he's still considering to move forward

with the Highway 407 east, the new-build nuclear plant—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Members' statements?

DURHAM DAY

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to just follow, or add to, the very kind words from the member—I can't say "the member John O'Toole," so what I'll say is the member from Durham—who was there with a wide, vast majority of all members from all parties to be part of Durham Day.

I would like to acknowledge, as Mr. O'Toole—I can't say "Mr. O'Toole," again; I can say Durham riding. He mentioned the mayor of Oshawa, who speaks so highly of this government for assisting him and his colleagues in preserving General Motors in Oshawa; Whitby Mayor Pat Perkins; Ajax Mayor Steve Parish; Uxbridge Mayor Bob Shepherd—I guess the good Speaker is giving me some flexibility—Pickering Mayor Dave Ryan; Scugog Mayor Marilyn Pearce; Brock Mayor Larry O'Connor; and, of course, Clarington Mayor Jim Abernethy; but most of all regional chair Roger Anderson, who has done a yeoman's job of working with staff, in particular, Karen Hunt and Liisa Ikavalko and their hard-working team.

This all started two years ago when my fellow colleague from Pickering—Scarborough East—I can't say his name—Wayne Arthurs and myself got together and then later as another colleague of mine from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock came on and worked very diligently with us. This has been the very first, and I hope one of many, Durham Day projects at Queen's Park.

NURSE PRACTITIONERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like this House and the people of Ontario to know that for the second time the city of Orillia and area has been denied a nurse-practitioner-led clinic. I tell you that the community is extremely disappointed with this government.

Nancy Sutherland, a local nurse practitioner who is part of a group that made this submission to the province, was "very upset, disappointed, shocked" to learn that the city of Orillia wasn't chosen to house a clinic. In an interview with Orillia Packet and Times reporter Nathan Taylor, she noted that there are more than 6,000 people in Orillia and area who are without a family doctor or a nurse practitioner, and that is expected to increase dramatically over the next five years. She was shocked, "because we had an excellent submission." The submission was accompanied by significant community support, including an endorsement from city council, myself and the Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital.

The establishment of a nurse practitioner clinic would reduce the demand on the emergency room department that sees approximately 50,000 visits per year, and therefore would reduce wait times. The Ministry of Health and

Long-Term Care would not provide reasons for individual municipalities being denied clinics.

Orillia and area deserve a detailed explanation as to why they were refused a nurse practitioner clinic. The submission was excellent. They met the criteria. The demand is there. I ask the Ministry of Health to explain to myself and the citizens of Orillia and area why they were refused this important service for the second time.

This issue will be an election issue next fall, and I can tell you that while I have been at functions over the past two weeks, I've had dozens of disappointed citizens approach me who are outraged by this bureaucratic government decision.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mary Comazzolo down in Thorold takes care of her 90-year-old father, Carmine. Carmine worked hard all his life. He's a widower now and suffers from dementia, but Carmine stays in his own home—a bungalow. He can't live with his daughter because she's got a two-floor house and he wouldn't be able to get up and down because he's wheelchair-bound. Ms. Comazzolo has actually hired a full-time live-in caretaker for her dad, but Ms. Comazzolo also devotes all of her time after work and on weekends to caring for Carmine.

They had two days a week of day care in one of the long-term-care facilities, but as her dad's dementia got worse, the day care facility was shut to him. He was basically expelled and told, "Don't come back anymore." They don't have the staff or the equipment to change him, for instance, when he soils himself. They're frustrated because he tends to take too long to eat and plays with his food. Any of us who have had familiarity with Alzheimer's and dementia are all too familiar with that.

The CCAC will only allow her 12 hours a month—12 hours a month, three hours a week—of support in that home to care for their dad, to bathe him and feed him, among the other needs.

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This government has failed seniors like Carmine. They have failed people like Mary Comazzolo. They have failed people across this province who need support to live in their homes by their underfunding of CCACs and their abandonment of some of the most vulnerable people in Ontario.

EVENTS IN STORMONT-DUNDAS— SOUTH GLENGARRY

Mr. Jim Brownell: This is my first opportunity to publicly welcome back all my colleagues to this session in the Legislature.

After an event-filled summer, it is once again my pleasure to represent the constituents of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry as their member of provincial Parliament in this House. I am pleased to say that, through the work of the McGuinty government, my riding of

Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry has benefited from numerous funding commitments that will improve the quality of life for the citizens of eastern Ontario.

On September 1, Reynolds Food Packaging Canada in Summerstown, south Glengarry, received \$102,225 through the eastern Ontario development fund to increase production and to create 45 new manufacturing jobs over the next four years.

A little over a week later, on September 9, Beavers Dental in Morrisburg, in Dundas county, received a grant of \$412,939 through the same eastern Ontario development fund to help the company expand and create 10 new manufacturing jobs over the next two years.

On September 7, we celebrated the opening of 32 affordable housing units on Sixth Street in Cornwall through more than \$2.2 million in funding through the Canada-Ontario affordable housing program.

With work now under way at the new Discovery Centre at Upper Canada Village and major capital works being carried out at Crysler's Farm Battlefield park and the Long Sault Parkway, the St. Lawrence Parks Commission will soon welcome tourists to rejuvenated sites along the St. Lawrence River, through the investment of more than \$16 million.

This is only a fraction of the good news that was delivered to my riding this summer, and I thank the McGuinty government—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

POWER PLANT

Mrs. Julia Munro: Just last week, Ontario's Environmental Commissioner revealed the sham that is this government's environmental protection system. He revealed that local citizens had made multiple requests to bump up the peaker plant in my riding to a full environmental assessment. He said that the requesters made compelling arguments.

People are worried about possible impacts of the proposed natural gas-fired generator on local farmland and water, and whether the plant conforms to local and provincial planning policies. The province denied their request, and the commissioner said that if a request was not granted in this case, it is difficult to imagine a situation when such a request would be approved. In fact, the commissioner could not find any bump-up requests that this government has granted.

Not only did the government refuse a bump-up request for this plant, it now wants to exempt the whole project from the Planning Act. I remember a few years ago when this government made such a big deal over establishing the greenbelt. Now they want to put a power plant in the middle of it without proper environmental review and with no say given to local residents.

Your environmental policies are a sham, and people are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

PAKISTAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Phil McNeely: On September 21, 2010, I had the pleasure of attending a celebration of the 63rd anniversary of Pakistan Independence Day. This celebration was organized by the Canada-Pakistan Association of the National Capital Region, under the direction of president Lubna Syed, a community leader from my riding of Orléans. Although the tragic flooding in Pakistan weighed heavily on the Pakistani community, there were reasons to rejoice and celebrate the individual accomplishments of its members.

Canadians of Pakistani origin have produced many leaders in Ottawa, and some were honoured during the wonderful independence day celebration. Dr. Munir Sheikh, formerly Canada's chief statistician, was praised for his accomplishments and his principled position, recently taken at great personal loss, but for the good of all Canadians.

Bushra Saeed was honoured. She had won the principal's award for leadership and the John Ralston Saul Award at her high school. This young Orléans woman then graduated with a degree in international development and globalization. She has shown tremendous courage as she recovers from injuries suffered during her tour in Afghanistan as a foreign service officer.

These are only two proud Canadians of Pakistani heritage honoured for their leadership during this important and interesting celebration.

Sana Syed did a great job as emcee for the evening.

TVONTARIO

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased today to recognize the celebration of a tremendous milestone for TVO: their 40th anniversary. An aside: That's only one year less than my wife's and my anniversary, our 41st, which is happening today as well.

Mr. Mike Colle: Happy anniversary.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Thank you.

We're joined today in the Legislature by TVO chair Peter O'Brian. TVO has been part of this province for four decades, pushing the boundaries of educational media in Ontario with an innovative focus on children's learning, supporting parents and citizen engagement. TVO continues to add new educational content to its programming, promoting literacy, citizenship and e-learning. We're committed to a strong and healthy TVO.

This celebration includes some special content. TVO is unlocking some of its best educational content from the past 40 years and creating a new public archive which will be freely available to all Ontarians. This archive will be a valuable online resource that can be used by Ontarians to access rare or vintage interviews, Ontario stories, and children's content that stands the test of time. It is exciting that TVO is preserving our culture and history in this way, and we should all be proud to live in a province with such a rich history.

I want to thank TVO for 40 years of excellence and for providing Ontarians with a truly unique way to experience our history.

KRISTAL GIESEBRECHT

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: It's with great sadness that I rise today to pay tribute to Master Corporal Kristal Giesebrecht of Wallaceburg, a Canadian soldier who was killed in combat on June 26 this year while she was serving in the Kandahar region of Afghanistan.

Master Corporal Giesebrecht was a medic in the 1 Canadian Field Hospital, based at CFB Petawawa, and while on her second tour of duty in Afghanistan was attached to the 1st Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment battle group.

Only the third Canadian woman to be killed in combat, Master Corporal Giesebrecht was repatriated on June 29 and was laid to rest on July 6 at Petawawa.

Born and raised in Wallaceburg, Ontario, Master Corporal Giesebrecht attended Ursuline College in Chatham and St. Lawrence College in Kingston before joining the Canadian Armed Forces. Described by friends and family who knew her best, Master Corporal Giesebrecht was an outgoing, athletic and energetic woman, a caring and wonderful friend, and a mentor and inspiration to her fellow soldiers.

On behalf of all members of the Legislature, I send my condolences and sympathies to the family and friends of Master Corporal Giesebrecht as they mourn the loss of a wife, a stepmother, a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a friend and a fellow soldier. I request that we observe a moment of silence in memory of Master Corporal Kristal Giesebrecht.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members and our guests to please rise as we observe a moment of silence in memory of Master Corporal Kristal Giesebrecht.

The House observed a moment's silence.

PETITIONS

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt and it goes as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" have been "performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Nick.

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CHILD CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services, Madeleine Meilleur, has decided that grandparents caring for their grandchildren no longer qualify for temporary care assistance; and

"Whereas the removal of the temporary care assistance could mean that children will be forced into foster care; and

"Whereas the temporary care assistance amounted to \$231 per month, much less than a foster family would receive to look after the same children if they were forced into foster care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately reverse the decision to remove temporary care assistance for grandparents looking after their grandchildren."

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition, coming from all over Ontario, and it goes as follows:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed these laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Megan.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of constituents from Scarborough. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Another petition, this one from the Women's Institute in Acton:

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services, Madeleine Meilleur, has decided that grandparents caring for their grandchildren no longer qualify for temporary care assistance; and

"Whereas the removal of the temporary care assistance could mean that children will be forced into foster care; and

"Whereas the temporary care assistance amounted to \$231 per month, much less than a foster family would receive to look after the same children if they were forced into foster care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately reverse the decision to remove temporary care assistance for grandparents looking after their grandchildren."

I support this petition, am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Megan.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition from a number of residents living in the 905 area.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning ... systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations, etc.;

"Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Tarion Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system

that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Tarion Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Tarion agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Tarion and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

I couldn't agree more, and I'm going to sign it and give it to Emily G. to deliver.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NARCOTICS SAFETY AND AWARENESS ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ET LA SENSIBILISATION EN MATIÈRE DE STUPÉFIANTS

Ms. Matthews moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances / Projet de loi 101, Loi prévoyant la surveillance des activités liées à la prescription et à la préparation de certaines substances désignées.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Guelph.

I rise in the House once more to speak to second reading of our government's proposed Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act.

Before I start, I would like to acknowledge Linda Sibley, in the gallery. Linda is the executive director of Addiction Services of Thames Valley. She graciously hosted us when we announced our provincial narcotics strategy last August in London.

I would also like to thank the members of the Narcotics Advisory Panel. Their advice has been key in the development of our strategy, which has led to this proposed legislation.

There is no question that this act, if passed, would save lives and protect individuals and families from the

damaging effects of the misuse of prescription narcotics and controlled substances. At the same time, with this proposed legislation, our goal is to restore the balance between providing appropriate pain treatment for those who need it while preventing misuse, abuse and addiction.

I would like to remind members of the crisis that is hurting families across Ontario. It's a crisis we must address, and we must address it now.

I was honoured last week to have Toronto doctor Rick Glazier join me in the House for the introduction of this bill. As you will remember, Dr. Glazier lost his 18-year-old son, who struggled with depression and anxiety, last year to an unintentional narcotic overdose. What struck me about Daniel Glazier's story is that his father, Dr. Rick Glazier, is someone who can prescribe narcotics.

He is a physician. On one hand, he can point to how important access to these drugs is for patients in need of pain management. On the other hand, he understands how important it is that the patient and prescribers better understand the dangers associated with these drugs, and that those responsible for the wide availability of these drugs for illicit purposes are identified and dealt with appropriately.

It took a lot of courage on the part of Dr. Glazier and his family to share their story. Dr. Glazier has gone on the record himself in support of our narcotics strategy. In a recent Toronto Star article, he said, "The main purpose [of the strategy] is to prevent these kinds of deaths and this kind of suffering, and we felt we had to do what we could to support it, even if it meant being in an emotional and difficult place."

I think a lot of good has already come from the bravery that Dr. Glazier has shown. I've heard of other parents and people suffering from addictions coming forward to tell their stories. What Dr. Glazier has experienced first-hand is happening to families province-wide.

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When it comes to prescription narcotics abuse, the facts are staggering: Thousands of people have died as a result of the abuse of narcotics. The coroner's office has reported a dramatic increase in overall opioid-related mortality. Indeed, three times more people die as a result of prescription narcotics than of HIV/AIDS. Narcotics-abuse-related admissions to publicly funded treatment and addiction services doubled between 2004 and 2009. Prescription drug charges in Toronto tripled between 2005 and 2008. And according to police, OxyContin has become a lucrative commodity trafficked by both individuals and organized crime groups.

Dr. Glazier's story is just one of the many stories I have heard about the damaging effects of narcotics.

I have heard from Dr. Andrew McCallum, the chief coroner for Ontario. He said that "deaths due to prescription drug use, unlike illicit drugs, can be more easily prevented with the right tools."

The chiefs of our First Nations communities have declared states of emergency because of this problem—a problem that is devastating their communities and their people. And I've heard from pharmacists who have been

terrified after being robbed at knifepoint for their drugs that they keep on hand.

According to Dennis Darby, the CEO of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association, "The misuse of prescription narcotics is a growing concern in Ontario and has become a serious safety issue for pharmacists and for their patients."

The police report that there has been an increase in crime because these drugs are trafficked on the street. Deputy Chief Ian Peer from my hometown of London joined me at the end of August as we released our strategy. He said, "Misuse and abuse of prescription narcotics does not just impact one's health. It impacts public safety in many Ontario communities. I am very pleased to see the province bring forward the narcotics strategy...."

The abuse of prescription narcotics or painkillers has emerged as a public safety issue in jurisdictions around the world. These drugs are being over-prescribed, they are being overused, and they are being obtained illegally and sold on the street for profit, while the people who buy them are getting sick and are dying.

Canada is one of the world's top per capita users of prescription narcotics, and in Canada, Ontario is at the top of the list of narcotic use on a per capita basis. It is not something we are proud of. This situation cannot be allowed to continue. We have to take steps to reduce the abuse so that people who need pain relief get it, but in the right doses and for the right length of time.

That's where our proposed legislation comes in. This legislation, if passed, would allow the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to collect, analyze, and disclose personal health information that relates to all prescription narcotics and controlled substances.

You see, Speaker, today there is simply no mechanism in place to stop people from going to several different doctors and several different pharmacies over and over again to get prescription narcotics. This has resulted in very high quantities of prescription narcotics and controlled substances being prescribed and dispensed, all with minimal oversight.

We are proposing an electronic database to enable the ministry to collect, monitor and analyze information related to prescription narcotics and other controlled substances. We would then be able to identify patterns of inappropriate or excessive prescribing and dispensing. It would allow us to implement a province-wide system of alerts when attempts to visit multiple prescribers, or visit multiple pharmacies, are detected. The database would provide access to comprehensive information, promote better prescribing and dispensing practices, and reduce the risk of addiction and death.

In particular, this database would allow for monitoring and analysis of this information for the purpose of flagging concerning or problematic patterns in usage, prescribing and dispensing. We are also moving towards a tiered response to the inappropriate use of narcotics, which could include educational support and resources, reporting to the appropriate regulatory college and, in extreme circumstances, reporting to law enforcement.

The database would provide greater accountability for health care professionals and protect our patients.

But the database is only one part of our overall narcotics strategy. As part of our broader narcotics strategy, we will also raise public awareness about safety, including youth education. We will also incorporate more narcotic and pain management education into the medical school curriculum, and we will work to educate prescribers and pharmacists about the appropriate use and dispensing of prescription narcotics. And by working with a group of experts, we are developing recommendations on how we can best move forward with better treatments for addictions. We're working to find a balance between access to pain treatment for patients and preventing misuse, abuse, and addiction.

You will recall that the all-party select committee of the Legislature on mental health and addictions released its report just a few weeks ago. Recommendation number 11 of that report was that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should immediately address the problem of addiction to prescription painkillers. With this proposed legislation, we are taking quick action to address the committee's recommendation.

We're committed to creating a mental health and addictions system that provides the right supports to people when they need them, as close to home as possible. Work is under way right now to improve the integration and collaboration to better meet the needs of Ontarians. We are basing our decisions on the best evidence available.

My advisory group on mental health and addictions will provide advice on overall direction and priorities for a new 10-year provincial strategy. This group is composed of a mix of consumers, families, providers, and researchers from across the province. Developing the strategy gives us the opportunity to raise the profile of mental health and addiction issues, it will help us identify opportunities to leverage existing resources, and it will ensure that the concerns and needs of people and families living with mental illness and addiction are addressed.

I take very seriously the select committee's report and will take it into consideration along with the recommendations made by my advisory group, our ministerial colleagues and our partners as we work to develop a comprehensive 10-year mental health and addictions strategy for Ontario.

Sadly, it is no exaggeration to say that people are dying due to their addiction to prescription painkillers. As a government, we simply have to act, and we have to act now. This legislation is a big step forward, and I am asking all members to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to expand on the comments made by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care at this second reading of our government's proposed Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act.

As the minister just said, the misuse and abuse of prescription narcotics is having a devastating effect on individuals, on their families and, indeed, on entire communities across Ontario. Drugs containing oxycodone or other narcotics can lead to addiction in anyone, and they affect everyone differently. Some people can take them as prescribed and move on with their lives; others become addicted. Neither the person's level of education, nor socio-economic status, nor personal traits determine the outcome. In every community, across the spectrum of all ages and both sexes, addiction to prescription narcotics can lead to very damaging outcomes.

Often, what touches off dependence is a commonplace occurrence that can happen to any one of us, something like an injury at a workplace, dental surgery, an accident. The person's physician or dentist may prescribe narcotic-containing medications for the pain. Without suffering any sort of prior traumatic history or personal difficulties, the individual can get addicted. He or she needs more and more of the drug when pain makes it unbearable to do without the drug. People who have never abused drugs in their lives get on oxy or another narcotic and can't get off it on their own without the help of some sort of support network or medical intervention.

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Previously productive people become unable to support themselves. In fact, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board says that the over-prescription of addictive narcotics can have a damaging effect on injured workers' health and ability to return to work.

When the public accounts committee was looking at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board this past winter, it was interesting that this whole discussion around the high cost of dealing with people who are addicted to oxycodone came up in the report of the Auditor General on the WSIB in looking at areas where their costs have escalated. So it isn't just medical professionals who are telling us about this need do something to intervene. It's actually coming from places as unexpected as the province's Auditor General.

In response, the WSIB has developed and implemented its own narcotics prescription strategy and welcomes our government's initiative in promoting responsible use of these addictive drugs.

It's a shocking, sometimes even shameful thing for people and their families to discover that they are addicted to prescription painkillers. And it leads to much worse. They may lose their family health care provider, who no longer wants to continue providing the drug. They may face stigma, the loss of productivity and, in extreme cases, the loss of family, friends and other community connections as they fall deeper into the spiral of addiction.

For the broader community, the effects are very serious too. Feeding their drug habit becomes the central focus of addicted people's lives. If they can't get prescriptions from their doctor anymore, they may resort to crime to support their addiction. That means more rob-

beries, more violence and more drug trafficking in communities right cross Ontario.

Prescription narcotics have become a highly lucrative commodity, resulting in widespread diversion from legal use into trafficking by individuals and organized crime groups.

Significant increases in pharmacy robberies and thefts of narcotics are making their profession dangerous for pharmacists in communities across Ontario. In fact, the pharmacy just down the street from me was broken into a few months ago during a rash of narcotics-related break-ins at pharmacies in Guelph.

This is a problem that has been many years in the making. Since 1991, prescriptions for oxycodone-containing medications have risen by 900%. That's nine times the use level that it was just a few years ago. The ministry spent \$156 million on narcotics for Ontario drug benefit program recipients in just one year, 2009-10, for 3.9 million prescriptions. This equates to an average of over six prescriptions per person on that drug plan. Now, obviously, not every individual has six prescriptions for painkillers, which tells you that some individuals have a very high number of prescriptions. But the average annual cost per person is \$260 for the Ontario drug benefit program.

Such overuse and misuse mean higher rates of narcotics-related overdose deaths, which, tragically, have doubled since 2004. They also mean higher rates of addiction and admittance to treatment centres, where, again, admissions have doubled between 2004 and 2008. This places additional pressure on the province's 150 substance abuse treatment programs.

One of the groups most affected is First Nations. In fact, a majority of Ontario's First Nation communities, including the Chiefs of Ontario, have declared a state of emergency over the abuse of prescription narcotics, particularly oxycodone-containing drugs. The Matawa Chiefs have stated that prescription narcotics abuse and addictions are putting "people's lives at risk, resulting in spiking crime rates, theft, violence, child neglect and elder abuse." The Matawa Chiefs also expressed growing concerns about the development of an underground economy with drug dealers targeting their communities, and with rising crime.

Minister Matthews mentioned the report of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addiction. I was very privileged to serve on that committee, and every single First Nation community we visited as we travelled around the province identified the abuse of prescription narcotics as, really, their leading addiction challenge currently. We heard about it over and over again, and I think it's one of the things that truly surprised the committee, in the sense that we didn't realize how extensive the problem was until we talked to the folks we visited with around the province.

We heard in one remote northern community that one tablet of OxyContin could cost several hundred dollars. People were so desperate to get hold of the drug that the

price had gone to this unbelievable level as it was being illegally trafficked.

But I wouldn't want to leave readers with the impression that this is simply a First Nations problem. Again, as we travelled around the province in urban Ontario and in rural Ontario, we heard the same thing. It's a rising problem: narcotics addiction through prescription narcotics. In fact, I've heard the same thing in my riding of Guelph.

One of the first visits that I had as a new MPP was from Sister Christine, who runs our local drop-in centre. The first thing she wanted to talk to me about, actually, wasn't poverty or the lack of housing, which would be what I might have expected. The thing that was at the very top of her list was her observation of the growing number of people, among the most vulnerable people in our community, who were becoming dependent on prescription narcotics.

Over the years I've heard from families who are at their wit's end. Again, we hear the story all over the place: Someone has been injured, goes for surgery, is prescribed prescription painkillers and becomes dependent, and the family is at their wit's end trying to figure out how to intervene in this cycle of addiction.

Wherever the select committee went in the province, we heard that this was indeed a problem and, as the minister mentioned, this led us to make the recommendation that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should immediately address the problem of addiction to prescription painkillers. So, I'm very pleased that the minister has recognized that the problems are serious and we just cannot let this situation fester and do nothing about it.

We, as a ministry and as a government, feel that we need to take strong action to turn the tide. That's why the minister struck the Narcotics Advisory Panel to provide advice on how best to develop Ontario's narcotics strategy. It was established in March 2009. The 12-member group includes family physicians, pain and addiction specialists, pharmacists, coroner's office representatives, professional regulatory bodies and law enforcement. They recommended a multi-pronged approach of a broad narcotics strategy, and this proposed legislation is one piece. But the broader strategy will focus on treating patients with addiction, investigate additional options for treating and supporting those addicted to prescription narcotics and controlled substances, develop educational workshops on the treatment of narcotics dependence, and support the work with relevant partner treatment and addiction organizations and agencies, including the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and ConnexOntario.

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We also intend to educate Ontarians about the danger of misusing and abusing prescription narcotics. We will take steps to ensure that these drugs are appropriately prescribed, dispensed and used. It may be interesting to you to know that our narcotics strategy would put Ontario in line with six other provinces and 33 US states that have prescription drug monitoring programs in place already. Our government is focused on helping individ-

uals, families and communities avoid and recover from the effects of prescription drug misuse and abuse.

We need the support of every member for our proposed Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act to make this happen. I sincerely hope that all three parties will support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to rise at this point to make a few comments on the remarks that have already been made by the Minister of Health and the member from Guelph. I will be expanding on them in due course in my own remarks, that is, but we certainly acknowledge the need to take steps to deal with the growing problem with prescription drug abuse. It is exploding across communities all over Ontario, and it is something that is going to require a multi-faceted approach, of which the maintenance of this database is one part.

There are many other recommendations that have been made by a number of groups that have knowledge of this issue: by the pharmacists' association, by the College of Physicians and Surgeons and by our own Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. We released our report at the end of August and did recommend that the minister take steps immediately to address the issue of prescription drug abuse. I'm pleased to see that this matter is coming forward in a very timely manner, because it is something that needs to be addressed. We have had far too many fatalities.

There was a physician who was in the audience and was part of the narcotics control panel. He had tragically lost his own son some 14 months ago as a result of an accidental overdose of prescription drug medication. Any one of our young people that we lose to such a horrible addiction—we certainly need to do everything we can as legislators in order to make sure that we stop this problem in its tracks.

There are lots of other issues that I would like to speak about. There are some concerns that some groups have with respect to maintaining a balanced approach to this to make sure that the people who do require pain medication for chronic conditions for legitimate reasons will continue to have access to those medications. We look forward to hearing from those groups in committee once we pass second reading so that we can make sure that this is a fully balanced approach that deals with the problem but doesn't prevent those needing the medication from getting it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I was pleased to see that shortly after—that shortly that it was the day after—the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions put out their report, *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*. One of our recommendations—number 11—talked about the need to address narcotics misuse in as brief a time frame as possible. The next day, the minister actually announced that she was going to take a step in

that direction. When we talk about quick timing, I was very pleased with this.

We have 23 recommendations. There have been 22 days since then, and the rest of them are not coming quite as quickly. But still, let's celebrate small victories, and that certainly was one.

As soon as the House was called back, the Minister of Health introduced Bill 101, which we're talking about today and which gives us a better idea as to what needed to be changed in the law in order to move their strategy forward. The creation of a data bank, the creation of a monitoring system, is certainly something that we support. It's something that is needed in Ontario and something that will help, so we will certainly be in favour of those steps.

In my remarks, I will be going into further details as to what also needs to come with Bill 101 in order to truly reflect recommendation number 11 in our report, and I look forward to doing so this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: A while ago, I was speaking to the mayor of Brockton, Charlie Bagnato, about the fight people of his community have had with the problems of OxyContin and the devastating effect it's had on young people especially, and the addiction that is devastating. It's very much directly related to this legislation.

We always think of drugs—we think of cocaine, we think of marijuana and all these other drugs, but, sad to say, these prescription narcotics that you get at your drugstore are devastating families all across Ontario. The drugstores—they're legally prescribed. The astonishing stat here is that between 1991 and 2009, prescriptions for narcotics containing oxycodone, like Percocet and OxyContin, rose by more than 900%.

I see some young people sitting here in the audience. Be wary of these prescribed drugs. If you've got a problem, see your doctor. There isn't always a solution through narcotics prescriptions. Please avoid them. I think what we're trying to do is educate all of us—all the doctors and pharmacists, all the families, parents and students across Ontario—that this kind of madness has got to stop. It is horrendous.

I know there is a multi-million dollar football player, JaMarcus Russell with the Oakland Raiders—this guy is making about \$10 million a year. He's addicted to this thing called purple drank, which is basically codeine syrup plus some alcohol. He's so buzzed out, he's no longer playing football. This is a guy who had the whole world in front of him—\$10 million a year, a quarterback with the Oakland Raiders, an incredible superstar. But because of an addiction to codeine that's prescribed, legally or illegally, this young man is now basically devastated—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to respond to the minister's and the parliamentary assistant's comments on the leadoff for Bill 101.

I was happy to hear the minister make reference to the database as being only one part of the strategy. It's vitally important that we are able to track where these prescription narcotics and drugs are being prescribed and by whom, but it is equally important to actually assist people who have already become addicted. We saw that first-hand, of course, travelling with the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions.

I think particularly of a very proactive band council in Sandy Lake, where they purchased a drug-sniffing dog and were able to decrease the amount of prescription drugs that were basically being smuggled into the community. But the chief's point was that we still have the young people and the individuals who have this addiction and we must treat that addiction.

I hope that once we get past Bill 101 and once we have it in committee, the next stage we will talk about is how we can actually ensure that those people who have become addicted are going to have the access to treatment that they so desperately need. It's not like switching off a switch; it's a pretty tough addiction to shake. We owe it to the individuals who have already been caught in that web to ensure that the access to treatment is available to everyone in Ontario.

So while I support Bill 101, I hope it's not the last step on this journey.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to thank the members from Guelph, Whitby—Oshawa, Nickel Belt, Eglinton—Lawrence and Dufferin—Caledon.

I have to say that I am extremely pleased with the response that this legislation is receiving from members in this Legislature. I think we have, many of us, started to learn and have heard first-hand stories about the devastation that is caused by the abuse of prescription narcotics, and it is very heartening to hear that members from all three parties in this Legislature are encouraging us to push forward with this. We, of course, know that this is not the solution to all that ails, but it is a big step forward. It will prevent new people from becoming addicted, and that is a very important part of a comprehensive strategy to reduce the abuse of prescription narcotics.

I think that, as people in this Legislature, we sometimes have opportunities to talk to people that we would not if we didn't have this very privileged role, and I do encourage all members in the House to take the time to visit the addiction treatment centres in their communities and talk with people who have first-hand experience with this major problem. I think if we all do that, we will be able to move forward as quickly as possible. The faster we can get on with this, the happier I'll be.

1400

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I appreciate the opportunity to speak once again on behalf of the PC caucus to the Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act, 2010.

In my response to the minister's statement on this subject on September 15, I did indicate preliminary support for this bill, subject to a more thorough review. We continue to support this legislation but stress that it must be only the first in a series of steps that need to be taken in order to properly address the issue of prescription drug abuse in Ontario. The minister has already acknowledged it as such, so we look forward to seeing more strategies forthcoming in the next few months.

In the time available to me, I would like to speak to the extent of the problem and some of the other steps that in our view need to be taken, as well as to outline some of the comments and concerns that have been expressed to me to date with respect to this bill.

Ontario is in the midst of a public health and safety crisis stemming from the inappropriate prescribing, dispensing and illicit use of the group of prescription drugs known as opioids. These drugs, which are commonly referred to as narcotics, are used to relieve moderate to severe pain. There are two types of narcotics that are usually taken orally: short-acting and long-acting. Percocet and Tylenol 3 are types of short-acting medication, while OxyContin, which contains oxycodone, is an example of a long-lasting medication. In instances of severe addiction, these tablets are not ingested orally but are either crushed and snorted as a powder or are mixed with liquid and directly injected.

These narcotics are powerful pain relievers that, used properly, provide relief to sufferers of chronic pain. Recently, however, their use has been diverted, and opioid misuse now accounts for an increasing number of fatalities, a huge increase in addictions, growing crime rates and significant social consequences that have already been alluded to by the minister and by her parliamentary assistant.

This problem is not confined to Canada, but Canada is the world's largest per capita consumer of opioids, and Ontario is at the top of the list in Canada for narcotic use on a per capita basis. Between 1991 and 2009, the number of prescriptions in Ontario for oxycodone drugs rose by 900%. OxyContin, a type of oxycodone drug, is the most easily procured opioid for non-medical use on the streets of Toronto. According to a report recently prepared by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario on this subject called *Avoiding Abuse, Achieving a Balance*, "There has been a steep and unprecedented increase in the number of individuals seeking treatment for oxycodone addiction since controlled-release (long-acting) oxycodone products became available in 1995. The number of admissions at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) medical withdrawal management service seeking treatment for opioid detoxification related to controlled-release oxycodone went from 3.8% of ... admissions in 2000 to 55.4% in 2004," a startling increase.

CAMH also found that among Ontario high school students, one fifth reported using opioids or at least one prescription drug without a doctor's prescription in 2009, compared to only 12% of students who reported smoking cigarettes. That was shocking to me. I had no idea that the amount was so high.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I'd just ask you to stop the clock for a minute. I would ask those members who would like to have private conversations to perhaps take them to the members' chambers outside. Thank you.

The member can continue. Thanks.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Speaker.

The report also contains statistics concerning fatalities. Deaths due to oxycodone rose from 35 in 2002 to 119 in 2006, an increase of 240%.

The impact on public health is clear; so too are the legal and social consequences. In communities across Ontario, the trafficking of prescription narcotics by both individuals and organized crime groups has resulted in a doubling of prescription drug arrests in Toronto between 2005 and 2008 and a significant increase in pharmacy robberies and thefts of prescription narcotics. As many of us have seen, most pharmacies now across the province of Ontario have signs in their windows or on their doors saying that they do not routinely carry products with oxycodone, but they will special-order it in for specific patients' use. That's to keep them from having robberies being perpetrated across the province with an ever-increasing frequency.

The problem with the abuse of prescription narcotics is particularly acute in many First Nations communities. Being a member of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, I had the opportunity to travel to some of our First Nations communities where the population has really been decimated, particularly in the north, where the OxyContin tablet that may sell on the streets of Toronto for \$45 to \$50 sells for several hundred dollars. In a situation where you may have an average income per month of about \$1,000, and one tablet can take up several hundred dollars, you can imagine the kind of social upheaval that this problem is causing in many of our communities, as it is across all of our communities in Ontario.

Before I move on to the legislation itself—and I'd like to spend a little bit of time on that—there is one further statistic to share, and that is the cost of these drugs within our health care system. In 2009-10, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care spent \$156 million on narcotics for Ontario drug benefit program recipients, or 3.9 million prescriptions. This equates to an average of six prescriptions per person and an annual cost of \$260 per person. This, of course, doesn't include the number of narcotics prescriptions that are paid for privately, but the implications are clear: We need to do something about this problem, and we need to do it immediately.

So what does Bill 101 do? It's part of Ontario's overall narcotics strategy, which aims to promote the proper use of prescription narcotics and to reduce drug abuse

and addictions among Ontarians. In developing this strategy, the ministry relied upon the expert assistance of the Narcotics Advisory Panel, and we are certainly grateful for their advice and counsel, as well as the assistance which the ministry has received from key stakeholders, including health profession regulatory colleges, First Nations communities, law enforcement officials, pharmaceutical manufacturers, third party payers, families who have lost children to narcotics overdoses, and individuals themselves suffering from addiction.

According to the ministry, the narcotics strategy will:

(1) curb inappropriate access to prescription narcotics and other controlled substances by providing education and raising public awareness about the safe use of these drugs;

(2) partner with the health care sector to support appropriate prescribing and dispensing practices through education;

(3) improve monitoring of the prescribing and dispensing of narcotics and controlled substances through the development of a provincial narcotics database; and

(4) look into options for treating and supporting those addicted to prescription narcotics and controlled substances.

So Bill 101 deals with one element of the strategy, and that is the creation of the database, but there are many other aspects to this strategy that remain to be implemented. The provincial narcotics database would allow the ministry to monitor and analyze prescribing patterns to detect unusual or inappropriate behaviour and to take action as necessary. Currently, there is no way for a doctor or other prescribing health care professional to find out if his or her patient has recently been prescribed a narcotic or other controlled substance.

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That came as a big surprise to me, and I would imagine that comes as a big surprise to many people across the province of Ontario, but that's the way it is right now. This has led to a massive increase in what they call "double-doctoring" or "doctor shopping," where people go from one physician to another and one pharmacy to another in order to stockpile medications which they either want to use themselves or to traffic on the market through third parties.

Other jurisdictions have already dealt with this problem. In the United States, 41 states have already enacted legislation for prescription drug monitoring programs. Nova Scotia has a program that includes legislation, monitoring, education and support for patients and health care professionals which is currently being followed by New Brunswick. Other provinces, including British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, have triplicate prescription programs. To date, both Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia have reported a decrease in narcotics use as a result.

Within Ontario, there appears to be strong support for Bill 101. The Ontario Pharmacists' Association supports the Ontario narcotics strategy. I quote from their press release dated August 27 of this year: "Prescription nar-

cotic diversion and abuse is a serious safety issue for all of us—from the pharmacists and other health care professionals who are trying to ensure patients have access to the medicines they need, to the communities that are harmed by diversion and abuse.” This remark was made by Dennis Darby, the CEO of the Ontario Pharmacists’ Association.

The Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons is also developing their own strategy to deal with prescription drug abuse. They have issued a report called *Avoiding Abuse, Achieving a Balance: Tackling the Opioid Public Health Crisis*, which I referred to just a few moments earlier. This report actually resulted from a May 2009 forum that was facilitated by the college with a wide spectrum of stakeholders to identify issues and potential solutions. So this has been discussed for some time now and there are some very thoughtful opinions and views that are being brought forward by this report. But the report notes, and I would say correctly, in my view, that there’s no simple solution to this problem. Any approach has to be multi-faceted in order to effectively deal with the problem.

This particular report, the report issued by the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons, makes some 31 recommendations that are grouped under five central themes:

- significantly enhance the training and ongoing education of health care providers;

- improve education and awareness of the public with a particular emphasis on high-risk communities;

- create a coordinated, accessible system for the treatment of pain and addiction that is based on the inter-professional model of care and includes an expanded network of specialized ... pain clinics;

- make greater use of technology to improve outcomes for patients and reduce diversion by: taking immediate steps to make all opioid prescription information available to all prescribers and dispensers; establishing a drug information system (including a drug monitoring system) that allows all prescribers and dispensers to access complete medication profiles;

- empower health care professionals, institutions and law enforcement agencies to reduce diversion by facilitating information-sharing and establishing a duty to report criminal activity.”

The Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions also considered the growing threat of prescription drug abuse. A number of the members of the Legislature here today were also members of the committee. We heard from hundreds of presenters, including mental health and addiction specialists as well as individuals and families, about the problems with our mental health and addictions system. We also heard from many of them suggestions for change.

Our report, the final report of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*, was released to the

public on August 26 of this year and was unanimously adopted by all members of this Legislature just last week.

So there are a number of individuals and groups that have made a significant number of recommendations, some of which have been incorporated in the overall narcotics control strategy, but I believe there is more that is yet to be done. But all of them have stressed, again, that there is no simple solution to this problem and that we need to take action on a number of fronts.

Some concerns have been expressed to me that I would like to just speak briefly about. The first issue—and I think it has largely been dealt with but I look forward to hearing about it in committee—is some privacy and confidentiality concerns that will necessarily be involved once you have a number of people who have access to a person’s prescription history. There is some tracking of this in various different places, but this will be the first time that there will be this comprehensive system and there will be a number of people who will have access to it. I look forward to hearing from the Information and Privacy Commissioner that all of her concerns with respect to this bill have been addressed.

The second issue is a concern with the creation of the database. I think it needs to be said that if we had a properly functioning system of electronic health records here in Ontario, we might possibly have avoided some of the problems that we have encountered with prescription drug abuse. But the fact is, we don’t have such a functioning system and—

Interjection.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Well, that’s right. As the member from Halton has indicated, we’ve spent almost a billion of taxpayers’ dollars on creating a functioning electronic health records system and we still don’t have one, and it’s going to be at least 2015 before we get one. I think that’s why we need to create this separate prescription database as sort of a band-aid solution until we have a properly functioning eHealth system across the board.

I think that my concerns in this respect would be that this is going to cost more time and money for Ontario taxpayers. We probably could have avoided it if we had the system up and running. It has been estimated that it’s only going to take \$1 million to implement this database and that it should be up and running within the next year. Well, I would say this government doesn’t really have a good track record when it comes to creating electronic databases, so I won’t be holding my breath that it’s going to come in on time—on the time side or on the money side. That is going to be a particular challenge, but nonetheless, the idea of creating a database is important.

The third issue I’d like to address is just the lack of coordination. One of the major issues that we confronted with the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions was how to deal with the sort of fragmented approach that we take with respect to mental health and addictions treatment here in the province of Ontario. There are hundreds of agencies, both mental health and addiction agencies, across the province but they’re not

uniformly distributed, not available in all parts of the province and they don't always work together. That is why we came up with our first and probably most important recommendation, which was the creation of Mental Health and Addictions Ontario as the large, umbrella organization to coordinate the availability of a core basket of mental health programs and services across the province and to make sure that no matter where you live, whether you live north, south, east or west in this province, in a rural area or an urban area, you will have access to the same treatment facilities. This is significantly lacking with respect to addiction facilities particularly.

That is why we are recommending that the minister—in addition to recommendation number 11, which is to immediately address the issue of addiction to prescription painkillers, we're also urging her to take a serious look at implementing the other 22 recommendations; there are only 23 contained in this report. We're going to be looking forward to her announcement in the very near future that she intends to implement the full report, because in our view this is going to be necessary in order to give Ontarians the type of mental health and addiction services that they really need.

There has also been a concern expressed to us by a number of groups, which I spoke to a little bit earlier, about the need to make sure that we have a balanced strategy, that we develop one that's going to prevent the abuse of prescription drugs but, on the other hand, is going to make sure that there is relief available for those people in Ontario who truly need it.

I have been given some statistics. I understand that there are an estimated 2.4 million to 3.6 million Ontarians living with chronic pain, some of which is quite debilitating and includes neuropathic pain, arthritis, back pain and fibromyalgia, and that there is a real need for a variety of treatment options for people who are suffering from chronic pain. This includes access to different medications and devices as well as psychological counselling, exercise and physical therapy. They also need health care professionals who are educated about pain management, and patients themselves need to play an active role in their own self-management.

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These are all components of a comprehensive pain strategy that Ontario desperately needs. Other jurisdictions, such as Alberta, Quebec and Nova Scotia, have successfully implemented pain strategies. So we need to make sure, as I said, that we allow for that balance that we really need when we're speaking about creating this database.

Another issue that I've heard about—this is something we heard about in the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions and really relates to this basket of services we're talking about that is available across the province—is a serious lack of addiction treatment facilities, particularly for young people. We heard from parents across the province who needed to send their children to other jurisdictions, usually in the United States—

they seem to have some of the best and most available facilities.

So we really need to take a serious look to make sure that our young people, in particular, can be treated in their own province, where their families live and their supports exist. Again, that's something we wanted to deal with, with the creation of Mental Health and Addictions Ontario, within the select committee, and we even went so far as to write a mission statement to help guide them on their way, which indicates that Mental Health and Addictions Ontario will work to “reduce the burden of mental illness and addictions by ensuring that all Ontario residents have timely and equitable access to an integrated system of excellent, coordinated and efficient promotion, prevention, early intervention, treatment, and community support programs.”

I think that's again something we need to be cognizant of as we consider how we're going to control prescription drug abuse. It's not enough to just identify it within the database; that's a good first step. But we need to make sure we have facilities that we can get people into, once the issue has been identified, so that they can get the help they need.

Finally, I would just like to explain a bit about the extent of the problem and some of the other concerns that have been expressed to me. I did receive quite a long communication from a family in southwestern Ontario, when this legislation was first introduced, which explains some of the struggles they had with their son and, I think, really shows that this problem isn't restricted just to the Ministry of Health. It's a big problem and has many facets, but there are other elements of this that I think we need to be cognizant of and make sure we address.

Just to tell you a little bit about what happened here and explain the family's concerns, these were parents of a 30-year-old son who recently passed away from the cumulative effect of a number of prescription medications as well as an inadvertent fatal dose of fentanyl. This young man had suffered from social phobia and anxiety for many years, which he masked with prescription painkillers and quickly became addicted. He began to go from doctor to doctor to obtain prescriptions.

From October 2009 until this young man's death in February 2010, there was a significant increase in the number of medical appointments he was attending. I was given a list by the family of the number of physician and other health care professional visits he had and the number of prescriptions this young man got, and I actually couldn't believe it—the list went on. Over this five-month period, this young man received 61 prescriptions, all for prescription painkillers. He went to eight pharmacies and saw 12 health care professionals: 11 physicians and one dentist.

This shows the extent of the problem, which in itself may not be that unusual when you're talking about young people who have this kind of problem. But there is another little twist in this. Since 2007, this young man had been a recipient of social services, first through Ontario Works and then through the Ontario disability sup-

port program. As such, he qualified for a drug benefit card, which covered the cost of medically recommended medications, and his transportation costs to medical appointments were also covered. The payments for transportation were made directly to this young man, and he was called upon to make the payments in turn to the transportation company under the honour system. Unfortunately, the payments were not made and an outstanding bill from the transportation company in the amount of \$1,687 was discovered after this young man's death.

There are many issues here. One is, surely there must have been a red flag at the Ontario drug benefit program as a result of the increasing number of prescriptions. Sixty-one prescriptions over a five-month period is incredible. You have to wonder why someone didn't ask questions about this. Secondly, how could anyone have thought that giving cash for transportation to a young man with a known addiction problem would be a good idea?

The family has asked me to raise these comments because they're really hoping that something is going to happen, as a result of their son's tragic death, to make sure that this doesn't happen to other young people, and that the appropriate adjustments are going to be made.

Finally, they asked me to express these views, and hopefully the ministry and the minister will be able to take some action on this:

"As a family we have carefully considered the events that transpired in the months leading up to our son's death. We believe that the way in which the social service program has been administered in my son's case, and the lack of appropriate safeguards, provided him the resources as well as enabled him to return to his addiction, resulting in his ultimate death. We question why a central registry for pharmacies to access was not in place to screen (and prevent) individuals from obtaining the same prescription at a number of places. Significant government funds have been recently spent, yet there is not an electronic single health file for physicians to ensure that patients are not 'doctor-shopping.' We question why there was not an inquiry or a review ... when there was a significant increase in the medical appointments, with the majority of them being at walk-in clinics as well as to my son's family physician visits.

"We would like a meeting with the ministry personnel to address the issues that have been presented as well as to look at strategies that can be implemented so that another family does not undergo the tragedy that our family has recently experienced.

"To summarize, our family would have concerns with the following matters and would like them to be addressed:

"(1) The 'honour system' regarding transportation costs for individuals with serious substance abuse issues.

"(2) A recipient's ability to attend multiple doctors.

"(3) A recipient's ability to have prescriptions filled at multiple pharmacies for the same and, at times, conflicting medications."

I will provide the family's information to the minister, and I would ask that the ministry look into these issues. I believe there may be a need to involve the Minister of Community and Social Services as well, just to highlight some of these issues that we also hope would be addressed within the context of this legislation.

As I said, we do support this legislation and we look forward to getting it into committee and to moving forward with the database and all other elements of the narcotics control strategy. I hope that the government will set aside the necessary time in order to hear and receive input from the public. We believe that it will be necessary to go on some travel with these hearings, particularly in the north, to make sure that people from all parts of Ontario have the opportunity to give us their advice and counsel with respect to this legislation, so that we can make sure that we actually are going to be attacking this growing problem in our province and come up with the best possible solution.

I thank you for the opportunity to make a few comments this afternoon, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I was very interested in what the member from Whitby-Oshawa had to say, particularly the issues she raised about privacy. With the new data bank and the new monitoring that will go on, things will change to help the people of Ontario, but it also, on the flip side, needs to be done well to make sure that we protect people's privacy.

We are going to be gathering data in a database, which links us back to eHealth. She certainly made the point that there are reasons to be a wee bit worried, because this government hasn't really been that stellar in developing eHealth. We hope that this is a new beginning, where this database will really make us all proud.

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She also talked about the lack of a coordinated system and went through this tragic case that she shared with us, which ended up in a most tragic way, and how those people deserve answers. Even without the changes, how could it be that nobody picked it up? How could it be that nobody knew? I would say to this that people did know. People could have done something but have not, and I haven't seen or fully understood how our new database and management system will force people to act, because there is knowledge that it happens already out there. There are people who know of physicians who abuse their prescribing power, pharmacists who do the same or patients who are multiple-doctor-shopping and yet nothing is done. So now a system will know. Where does the action come in?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm very pleased to see this bill being debated in this Legislature, as I have spoken several times in the past with pharmacists and they tell me about all the problems of overprescription, the problems of misuse and abuse of prescription narcotics and the

amount of these that are getting on the street. They're getting on the street through, many times, illegal means, and it's very difficult for the pharmacists to control it.

I know, with the electronic database and the other areas that are going to be improved, that we can get better control of these drugs. We must get better control of these drugs, because it's not only a major cost to our ministry in the costs of those prescriptions but it's the damage that's done to our youth and to the people who are consuming these drugs illegally. It's a step forward in control. It's knowing who is getting these prescriptions.

The electronic database will certainly help the pharmacists in being able to spot anything illegal. They tell me that when they speak with each other, three or four of them have had the same false prescriptions, the same people coming in to use prescriptions, and that seems to be a hit-and-miss method of control. So this would permit pharmacists to know and to be able to control. The system coming from the doctors, prescriptions coming from the doctors, will permit this whole area to be better monitored and better controlled and save our government money, but also save all those dollars that our kids—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to rise as well in support of this bill. We've already had a number of our speakers, especially the member from Whitby—Oshawa, who spoke in support of it. We've got some concerns, and we'd like to see it go to committee for improvements to the bill, as she's already outlined.

I know from my community in Sarnia—Lambton—this is also an issue there. It's not just in the larger urban areas. It's also a concern in small-town Ontario: Sarnia, Petrolia, areas like this. I have a family who are in the law enforcement business, and they tell me that from time to time this drug, OxyContin, and other drugs similar to it cause many concerns. Of course there are always the social concerns in families that this is causing as well, and to our young people, as a number of people have highlighted these tragic stories.

So I would urge the minister to take this bill to committee and to have the committee travel to hear these stories from both law enforcement and the medical community and from the families affected by these drugs. Also I'm sure the educational community and schools could have a big impact on this by talking about many of the issues that they see on a day-to-day basis in the classrooms and with people in after-school activities.

We have a number of issues. I don't think just creating the narcotic drug-tracking database will get to the root of the whole problem. It's a good start. We think that there are a number of other issues that need to be addressed as well. I look forward to the rest of the afternoon and the debate from all sides of the House, as people have brought their own experiences and their own riding issues to this House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments? There being none, the member from Whitby—Oshawa has up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I appreciate the comments made by the members from Nickel Belt, Ottawa—Orléans and Sarnia—Lambton. Some of the issues that they brought up—particularly, the member from Ottawa—Orléans had concerns with respect to public safety and the safety of pharmacists that are raised by this legislation. It is certainly hoped that the creation of the database will deter people from trying to misuse the system and will prevent the kinds of robberies that we're seeing, not just in urban Ontario but across the province. That's going to be another benefit that we'll be receiving from this legislation.

The other issue is the one of education. There is a real need to, I think, educate the public with respect to the very addictive properties of some of these medications that people start out taking quite innocently, for back pain or sports injuries or ailments of that nature, but that can quickly turn them into addicts who will do most everything to get the drugs that they need. So we need to educate the public. I think there's still some education that is needed on the part of physicians; there is an educational component to their curriculum just to make sure that they are prescribing medications that are appropriate for the injury and monitoring very carefully to make sure that people don't become addicted.

Other things that have been suggested to me are that they need to take a look at physician compensation as well; to make sure that physicians have the time to spend with their patients to make sure that they are not becoming addicted, and that often takes more time than physicians are able to spend with most patients in the course of their day; and that they should be given additional courses as time goes on to make sure that they continue to be apprised of the properties of these drugs and make sure that their patients are taking them for the proper reasons.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to put a few comments on the record about Bill 101, the Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act.

On August 26, the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions released its report, of which I'm really proud, called *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*. We have together, as a group, put forward 23 recommendations. Recommendation number 11 was about the misuse of narcotics.

On August 27, the Minister of Health announced a narcotics strategy for Ontarians. That was pretty fast. The strategy consists of five parts:

—first, the creation of an electronic database that would collect, monitor and analyze information regarding the prescription of narcotics and other controlled substances;

—second, working with health sectors—so, think physicians, dentists, pharmacists and nurse practitioners—to raise awareness about appropriate prescribing;

—third, working with the health sector—the same people—to raise awareness about appropriate dispensing;

—fourth, engaging in patient education to address excessive use and misuse of prescription narcotics and other controlled substances; we've heard a little bit this afternoon about youth usage of those drugs; and

—fifth, focusing on addiction treatment services.

This is what the announcement was all about.

On September 15—we went back on September 13, so, three days after we went back—the Minister of Health introduced Bill 101. Bill 101, once passed, will fulfill the first element of the narcotics strategy. Remember when it was announced in August? We're talking about five parts to it. Bill 101 really focuses on the first one; that is, allowing the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the executive officer of drugs—funny title there, but what can I say?—the ability to collect, analyze and report on the prescribing and dispensing of narcotics drugs; so, a database.

1440

It defines prescription narcotics and other controlled substances—which we will refer to from now on as monitored drugs, but basically they're mainly narcotics and a few more. Not only will that include opioids—which includes oxycodone and drugs that we've talked about, such as morphine, codeine and Tylenol 3—but also non-narcotic drugs, including stimulants such as methylphenidate, which is better known as Ritalin; benzodiazepine, better known as Valium; and barbiturates. Most of them are opioid drugs but some are non-narcotic drugs, and they will all be under the label of “monitored drugs” in our new database.

They will create a provincial electronic monitoring system that provides alerts when attempts are made to make multiple visits to prescribers or multiple visits to dispensers. So we will not only be gathering data, it will be used for monitoring.

It mandates information that prescribers and dispensers must provide to the minister and make it an offence to fail to disclose this information. That was a big surprise to me. I always thought that, in order to get a prescription, you needed to have your name, your OHIP number, the date, the signature of a physician and the actual drug that was being prescribed. Well, it turns out that you didn't really need to have all of this to have a prescription filled, but now you will. I thought it was always there, but now we're making it clear—dot the i's, cross the t's—that you will need all of that information on your prescription or you will get rejected and have to go back to square one.

It allows the minister to appoint inspectors who may enter a place of practice of prescriber or dispenser without notice or warrant. So those inspectors could go into a physician's office, a dental office; they could go into a pharmacy where those drugs are being dispensed without any warning—I'm guessing so that they can help those health providers do their job better.

Regulation-making authority for the Lieutenant Governor in Council for designated additional monitored

drugs: Remember, I read you a list of what was going to be in. This list could be expanded. They will have the power to do this, specifying additional information that must be provided, among other powers.

There is nothing in the legislation that moves forward on the other elements of the narcotics strategy. Remember, I started by reading you the five elements of this narcotics strategy. Bill 101 focuses on the first one. So everything that has to do with the education piece on the prescriber, on the dispensing side, on the addiction and treatment—all of this is not in the bill. We're hoping it will happen, but nobody really knows. Bill 101 does not address that. I sure wish it would be addressed, but it is not.

During both the narcotics strategy announcement and the introduction of Bill 101, the minister spoke about the scope and severity of Ontario's narcotics problem. Nobody will deny it. There is no question that we in Ontario have a serious problem with narcotic drugs. Come to northern Ontario and go to isolated First Nations communities—it is obvious. It makes the front page of the paper. When I was a supervisor for the nursing station in Gogama, we had a desperate man run his truck through the side of the clinic in order to break in.

The government is going ahead with those dispensing machines. I just want to forewarn: Never underestimate the power of a forestry worker with an axe who wants to get to those drugs. They will get them no matter where they are.

We have a big depot for the ambulance in Sudbury. It was also broken into in the hope of finding drugs. It doesn't matter where you go in northern Ontario, it doesn't matter where you go in isolated First Nations communities; whether you read the paper or go to the coffee shop, you will hear about this. Nobody disputes it. We need to do something. This is an issue that many communities have dealt with for a long time and an issue that requires effective and timely action, and you will hear me say “especially in northern Ontario and First Nations communities,” because I really believe that action is needed for those communities.

Statistics from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario on the scope of the problem are really sobering. The main source of prescription opioids are doctors' prescriptions—37%, considerably higher than the street source, which stands at 21%, or a combination of prescription and street, which is at about 26%. I would say that those statistics are pretty well province-wide. They certainly hold true where I come from.

According to one study, over 66% of deceased patients on opioids were seen by a physician in an outpatient setting four weeks prior to their death. This supports the hypothesis that increased rates of inappropriate or inadequately monitored opioid prescription contribute significantly to morbidity and unintended opioid-related death.

Oxycodone abuse is a growing problem. Prescription for oxy increased a staggering 850% between 1991 and 2007. Since the long-acting oxy has been added to the

Ontario drug formulary, there has been a fivefold increase in mortality and a 41% increase in overall opioid-related mortality. This is a recipe for disaster. Since controlled-release oxy products became available in 1995, the number of hospital admissions related to controlled-release oxycodone went from 3.8% to 55.4% in 2004.

I am going through all of these statistics to show you that no matter how you look at it, we have a huge problem that has huge consequences on a big segment of our population. These consequences come with drastic outcomes in terms of their quality of life and often lead to their demise.

CAMH found that among Ontario students from grades 7 through 12—those are relatively young people. We're talking about youths who are 12 to 17 years old. One fifth of the students surveyed—that's 20%—reported using opioid drugs in 2007. That's one in five of those cute-looking youths using those drugs. I've just gone through the statistics to show you the effect that those drugs have on people's health, on communities and on families.

By contrast, only 12% of students reported smoking cigarettes in 2007. It is a bigger problem than tobacco, which we all know is huge among our youth. Coroners' investigations have found that a high number of deaths are the result of a combination of drugs, some illicit, some prescribed, but the most troubling cases are arising in the chronic, non-cancer pain sector through illicitly obtained prescription opioids, which made the death toll double between 1992 and 2004.

This alarming rise in the number of unexpected deaths is clearly linked to the use of these drugs. Between 2002 and 2006, we can see a 49% increase in deaths directly related to opioid drug use. Deaths, specifically from one drug called oxycodone, are rising rapidly and accounted for a 240% increase, here, again, between 2002 and 2006. The numbers speak for themselves. It is time for action. Enough people have suffered, enough people have died, and too many people are addicted. It is high time to do something about it.

1450

Let's look at what it looks like on the streets. We know that a prescription, if you buy it yourself, if your physician gives you a prescription, comes to about \$4 a pill. When you sell it on the street where I live, you resell it for \$80 to \$100 a pill. Can you see where the attraction comes from? Go to an isolated First Nations community, where the rates of poverty are staggering, people can barely get by, entire families are crammed in and there's 27 of them living in a two-bedroom house, sleeping in shifts, and then throw in one or two of their family members with an addiction. It doesn't make for anything good. We have to act.

We agree that the creation of an electronic database is a step in the right direction. However, I have significant concerns about the absence of details regarding the other four pillars of the narcotics strategy that was put forward by our Minister of Health, the partial scope of the electronic prescribing/dispensing under this new database,

and the absence of a comprehensive plan for addressing narcotics addiction—and I will expand upon those.

As I said, the NDP will support Bill 101 because we want it to go to committee. I will go into more details as to making sure that the committee travels and comes to regions in the north and comes to the First Nations so that the bill really takes into account what is going on in those communities.

Given that Ontario has the highest use of opiates in Canada, it's kind of shocking that we are lagging behind so many other provinces in our attempts to control the inappropriate use of those drugs. If we look at Canada, we'll see that British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and PEI already have prescription monitoring in place, but Ontario doesn't. Bill 101 is going to fix this.

That's not where my concerns lie. My concerns come from what is missing in the bill rather than what is in the bill. Many questions have not been answered. I would like extensive committee hearings on this bill and I would like to move it in a more comprehensive direction.

Here again, I want to be on record to say that the committee has to go to isolated First Nations, because the misuse of prescription narcotics in those communities has completely changed those communities for the worse. We go into communities where the rate of addiction stands at 70%.

When you're dealing with a problem of this magnitude, sometimes a one-size-fits-all strategy doesn't work as well; plus, the delivery of health care in the north and in isolated areas of the north is completely different. Most of my riding doesn't have pharmacies; most have visiting primary care providers. A lot of them will dispense their own drugs. It's very different than in an urban area, where there is a range of primary care providers—you have hundreds of physicians practising in most urban centres; you have dozens of pharmacies. A strategy that works in that framework may not work so well when the one who prescribes is also the one who dispenses and is the only show in town, and this show only comes into town a couple of times a month.

So the concerns of those people, but also the strategies that they have, have to be heard, have to be taken into account so that this new legislation, this new step forward, will benefit everybody in Ontario.

What specifically is missing from Bill 101 that I would like to see? First, we'll all agree that this is a complicated issue, and solely putting forward a new database and data monitoring is not going to solve it all. Second, chronic pain management: In this, I talk about the inadequacy of training and the lack of availability of those services. Third, we have to talk about primary care and interdisciplinary care if we really want to tackle the misuse of narcotics. We also need to talk about addiction treatment such as methadone, which is the one most used in those cases. We need to talk about health professional education on chronic pain, on opioid management and on interdisciplinary collaboration. We need to talk about electronic tools beyond a database, moving toward an

electronic health record. As well, we need to have an evaluation of Bill 101's electronic monitoring system. We have to set out how we will know if this bill is doing what we had intended it to do.

We all know that we are dealing with a complicated issue. The problem of narcotics abuse is complex, and it will require a multi-pronged approach in order for it to be successful. There is a pervasive concern regarding whether Bill 101 will be effective in reducing the narcotics problem currently in Ontario—not that Bill 101 is not good, but it is not comprehensive enough. Ontario's current crisis of narcotics abuse is about a lack of many things: appropriate pain management services; a failure in this province to ensure that every Ontarian has a primary-care provider; it is about addictions and the lack of treatment services; it is about the failure to institute comprehensive electronic health records and electronic prescriptions; it is about a lack of interprofessional collaboration and interdisciplinary care; and it is about a lack of education, especially impartial, non-pharmaceutical-run education, for our health care professionals, and the list goes on. Those are serious concerns.

CPSO, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, recently released a report on this very issue called *Avoiding Abuse, Achieving a Balance: Tackling the Opioid Public Health Crisis*. I read their report from cover to cover. It is a whole lot more comprehensive than Bill 101, and it is worth the read. For one, the report is about 40 pages long, and it includes 31 substantial recommendations to tackle this issue. Today, the government is moving forward on one of those 31 recommendations: the one regarding the database and the management system. The CPSO report covers the entire breadth of the problem at hand. They can regroup their recommendations in five areas, and I'll read directly from their report.

Five key recommendations from the CPSO: "Creating a coordinated, accessible system for the treatment of pain and addiction"—if we want to tackle the misuse of narcotics, there has to be a system for the treatment of pain and then the treatment of addiction if you have developed an addiction to those medications.

Second, "Taking immediate steps forward to make greater use of technology to improve outcomes for patients and reduce diversion": This is, in part, what Bill 101 will work on.

Third, "Enhancing the training and ongoing education of health care providers and improving education and awareness of the public": Education about appropriate pain management, about dispensing, about prescribing, about the patient's use of those medications.

Fourth, "Empowering health-care professionals, institutions and law enforcement agencies to reduce diversion by facilitating information-sharing and establishing a duty to report criminal activity." This is not addressed at all within Bill 101. It is not addressed at all within the Ministry of Health's five pillars to action, but it is certainly something important and something that they raised in their report.

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We in the NDP have talked to stakeholders across the spectrum, from mental health groups to chronic pain groups to regulated health colleges to people living with an addiction. All they talk about is the need for comprehensive action. Together, they point to the vast majority of recommendations in the CPSO report. This is a report that has been put out to tackle the same issue that the minister wanted to tackle, but it does so in a much more comprehensive way which, everybody will agree, has the most chance of succeeding. Bill 101 is but a small part of this. The creation of a database, the sharing of information, the management is but one small part. The rest of it still needs to be in place, or we won't succeed.

I want to take this opportunity to commend the CPSO for the excellent work on this report, as well as all of the experts who were involved in writing this report.

There is no question, there is no denying, that an electronic monitoring system is an important tool, but it is only one small step and cannot impact the myriad factors that have contributed to the crisis Ontario currently faces. We've heard the statistics. We all agree there is a crisis. We all agree that the database is a helpful tool. What we're all saying is that it needs to be more comprehensive in order to succeed.

Let me talk a bit about chronic pain management.

There are between 2.4 million and 3.6 million Ontarians who live with chronic pain. Some of it can be quite debilitating. Yet there is no chronic pain management strategy in Ontario. Depending on the community in which you live, your access to pain management varies widely. But I can guarantee you one thing: Of the three health science centres that offer pain management, and of the few clinics not associated with a university that offer pain management, none of them is in northern Ontario; none of them is in isolated rural Ontario either, where the problem seems to have taken a disproportionately big proportion. Few dedicated chronic pain management clinics exist, and even fewer people know how to gain access to them.

There is inadequate education on not only narcotics but other pain management strategies for health professionals.

The reality is that because of delisting from OHIP services, many services that could effectively help in pain management are not accessible to most Ontarians any more. If you think about physiotherapy, which can be used for neuropathic pain, joint pain, arthritic pain etc., it is less invasive and it certainly has a lot fewer side effects than medication and narcotics. But those services have been delisted. What does that mean? That means that if you want access to physio, you have to pay. There are a few hospitals which still offer outpatient physiotherapy, but as they try to balance their books, there are less and less of those services available. So here we are looking at strategies to control pain that are now not affordable to most working Ontarians, at least Ontarians without coverage.

There is also inadequate education on not only narcotics but on other pain management strategies for health professionals. That's the reality. In Canada, there is no specialty for pain management specialists. Health professionals are often trying to do the best they can for their patients, but they do not have the tools to be making the right evidence-informed decisions.

We can now see support groups popping up just about everywhere for people with neuropathic pain who cannot find a way to manage their pain—who cannot find the help they need. When you go to see a health professional, pain is a symptom. Pain is never looked at as the problem itself; it's looked at as the side effect of something else. But for a lot of people—2.4 million to 3.6 million Ontarians—pain is a reality of life. The acute phase of their problem is gone long ago, but the pain has become part of their life and they have very little help in managing that pain.

The government acknowledged, in their narcotics strategy announcement, that there is a need for additional education and collaboration with health professionals, but we have not yet heard anything about an emphasis on chronic pain management. If we look at other provinces, Alberta, Nova Scotia and Quebec all have chronic pain management strategies. Why doesn't Ontario, the most populous province of them all, have a chronic pain management strategy? Creating such a province-wide strategy for chronic pain management is essential at this point, and I want to remind everybody that that strategy must bring equitable access for the people of northern Ontario as well as isolated First Nation communities.

Talking about primary care and interdisciplinary care, with close to a million Ontarians who still do not have access to a family physician, we must acknowledge that this is a significant barrier to reducing narcotic problems in Ontario. The CPSO—College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario—report I was just quoting, *Avoiding Abuse, Achieving a Balance*, states, "Access to health resources depends ... on patients' and health care providers' ability to navigate ... [an] integrated health system. An integrated system is one in which family physicians are closely linked to other primary care providers, as well as to specialty care physicians, particularly those working in specialized pain clinics. The ideal system would enable patients to access the most appropriate care from the most appropriate provider, easily and locally. ...

"Within an interprofessional model of care, patients are treated by different types of providers with training and expertise in different aspects of chronic non-cancer pain and addiction management."

When CPSO talks about narcotic management, they always talk about pain control and addiction management. Those two have to be linked.

"The objectives of interprofessional care go beyond just treating physiological symptoms to addressing psychological needs, social and occupational functioning and quality of life.

"For interprofessional care to be effective, there must be strong linkages between family physicians," whom

they call the gatekeepers of the health care system, "and other providers." Those other providers include "specialized pain clinics, nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, psychotherapists and counsellors," and the list goes on.

When Ontarians have a primary care provider, the potential for abuse declines. Let me repeat that: When Ontarians have a primary care provider, the potential for abuse declines—which means that for the one million Ontarians still without a family physician, the risk goes straight through the roof. Patients are more likely to be referred to an appropriate kind of pain management service and are more likely to receive a correct diagnostic if they have a primary care provider.

1510

On the issue of primary care, let me quote from the report from CPSO on page 9: "Ontario's traditional fee-for-service physician payment ... under OHIP encourages physicians to see high numbers of patients relatively quickly. This can be a disincentive to conducting comprehensive assessment and follow-up of patients with chronic non-cancer pain and addiction."

The fee-for-service model does not serve us well. You cannot provide quality primary care in a solo fee-for-service model. This has to go the way of the dinosaur. We need to move on, yet close to 60% of our primary care providers—60% of physicians—are still on fee-for-service when we know and the college knows that you cannot offer quality primary care within the solo fee-for-practice model.

The report goes on to say that community health centres "would be particularly useful given their focus on marginalized patients. Patients with opioid addiction are marginalized not only because of negative societal perceptions surrounding addiction, but also because they" may "face specific barriers to accessing primary care: They may lack transportation; they may have difficulty finding a primary care physician willing to treat patients with addiction; and their intense involvement with the methadone treatment program may alienate them from regular daily activities" such as working.

So CPSO is quite clear: Fee-for-service will never give us quality care. If we want this interdisciplinary team model that will deliver results, the community health centre is the way to go, with their salaried physicians who have the time to look into issues and who are not forced to go through a lot of patients just to be able to make a living.

The second part that is not in Bill 101 and that I would like to address is addiction treatment services. The Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, in our report, *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*—while we were gathering information for this report over the 18 months that we met, we held 30 days of hearings, we heard 230 presenters and we read 300 submissions. We found out that the province has contracts with 150 service providers for addiction services, but in spite of those 150 service providers, Ontarians are

not getting the assessment, the treatment and the services that they need to deal with their addiction.

Our recommendation number 11 reads as follows: "The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should immediately address the problem of addiction to prescription painkillers." Today we see a piece of this in Bill 101, but the question of addiction treatment services continues to be ignored, and we do not have a comprehensive strategy in front of us. We have no details on this, although, when the minister made the narcotics strategy, she went into the five pillars that I talked about at the beginning of my hour. It does not seem the government has entered into discussion with stakeholders on what this extension would entail. Government must acknowledge that we cannot separate the need for action on opiate abuse from addiction to other substances, and my colleague from Welland often links it to addiction to other things, such as gambling.

This legislation aims to reduce the supply of illicit narcotics, but we cannot simply cut off the supply and think nothing of helping to cure the addiction. We cannot allow the addiction to simply shift to what will become a more available drug. It is sad to say, but if oxy were to disappear from the streets of Sudbury, I have a sneaking suspicion that most of those addicts would turn to heroin. This is no choice. If we're going to have an impact on the supply, and the supplies of OxyContin are going to go down and make it harder and harder, this is not going to treat the addiction. It's not because you cannot find your fix that your addiction has disappeared. If it is not implemented right, all that will happen is that in Sudbury, they will turn to illicit drugs that are worse than the addiction they have now, that carry bigger risks to their health and to their lives than the addiction they have now. This is something real and this is something that we have to take into consideration as we move forward with this strategy.

We all want to get rid of inappropriate use of prescription narcotics, but we cannot do this at a cost of developing heroin addicts all over our province. This is not the solution. Nobody wants this. We know that this is what will happen. Let's be proactive about it and make sure that as the supply of prescription narcotics becomes better monitored, the availability of treatment is also increased, so that people have help dealing with their addiction rather than shifting their addiction.

The ministry has an obligation to clearly lay out a plan for ensuring that every Ontarian who is dealing with addictions like these has access to treatment. Without a plan, we are going to make things worse for the people with addictions, their families and the communities, because we all know what happens when the demand for those illicit drugs goes up.

Currently, the wait-list for assessment and treatment for addiction services is months long. You may have had your assessment, waited for weeks and said, "I am ready. I know I have an addiction and I want help in getting out of it," but then you are sent back home for months to fend for yourself until your turn actually comes up for

your treatment. During those weeks and months on the wait-list, lots of catastrophic events happen.

What our government is doing to change this remains a mystery. Nobody knows. Because Ontarians who are addicted to these kinds of drugs will not simply stop being addicted without help, the government must be prepared to do the hard work, from ensuring a full range of assessment and treatment services in addition to the work of preventing access. Only when all of those pieces work together will actual progress be made in combating addiction to prescription drugs. Here again, I feel compelled to say that as this strategy rolls out, the ministry has to ensure equitable access to the people of the north and equitable access to First Nations communities.

I want to talk a little bit about the issue of methadone clinics. In spite of the drastic increase in opioid addiction in Ontario—methadone is one of the treatments of choice right now—the number of methadone programs has not kept pace. Again, there are huge variances in Ontario in terms of access. At this point, I sound a bit like a broken record, but I have to say it: If you look at the level of access for the people of northern Ontario, who have higher-than-average addiction rates, we don't have access to methadone. Very few physicians practising in northern Ontario have the right to prescribe this treatment. There is also an absence of culturally appropriate treatment for First Nations communities, a lack of holistic treatment services, such as counselling, that would be linked to your primary care providers.

Addictions are complex, and there is not one approach that works for everybody. The fact that so many Ontarians do not have access to primary care providers, that counselling services are not funded and that methadone and other treatment programs are so unevenly distributed across the province are all issues requiring immediate action and attention as we move ahead.

1520

We have started to think about drugs such as subutex and suboxone that are also used, similar to methadone, for opiate addiction. Those are starting to be available in Ontario. We don't even talk about them in northern Ontario, because they don't exist. Those are not options that exist for people in northern Ontario.

Another issue that was mentioned in the pillars that the minister put out is the issue of health professional education. Family physicians receive, on average, 16 hours of pain education. That, by the way, compares to 87 for veterinary students, and it is hugely inadequate. If anybody is interested, physiotherapists receive 49 hours.

In the CPSO report, it is noted that, "Since the early 1990s, family physicians have been inundated with materials and information from pharmaceutical companies about the value of using opiates for more effective pain management. This education was largely focused on the potential benefits and failed to include education about the potential risks, including misuse, addiction and diversion. There was also little attention paid to the importance of appropriate goal setting, screening, monitoring for safety and effectiveness and protocols for

tapering or discontinuing” those medications. “As a result of issues stemming from mis-prescribing and other problems, some physicians have stopped prescribing opioids for chronic pain” altogether. “This has resulted in some patients being undertreated,” while other physicians continue to overtreat or prescribe inappropriately.

“Education, based on the best available evidence, delivered from non-commercial sources”—that is, not pharmaceutical companies—“is paramount in helping all health professionals deal effectively with chronic non-cancer pain, including the effective and safe use of opioid medication.”

We know we have to do better. We know that our health care professionals are struggling with this issue, with some not prescribing at all and some over-prescribing, and that the key to this is education. Chronic pain management needs to be approached in the same way that chronic disease management is; that is, long-term planning and goal setting.

Primary care providers need the educational training, as well as access to retraining, so as to determine whether opioids are appropriate, screen for the risks of those medications and their misuse, and set realistic goals with the patients. Currently, there is no comprehensive continuing education system for health care providers in Ontario, and it's estimated that 50% of ongoing education is delivered by pharmaceutical companies, the same companies who profit from selling those drugs.

CPSO and other colleges are working to develop standards for ongoing education, but the government may need to support those. I remember hiring quite a few new graduate physicians in my previous life, and they were always very stressed about prescribing narcotics. In their first months and years on the job, they would often refuse to prescribe narcotics. This is no better than when the older physician retires and you take over his or her practice and realize the high percentage of the clients who are on narcotics. Both extremes are no good. Those medications have their use, but they should be used wisely within a chronic disease management framework.

I want to talk about technology. Bill 101 proposes a good first step when it comes to narcotics tracking. When this legislation passes, it will mean that the Ministry of Health can collect prescribing and dispensing data for all patients in Ontario when it comes to narcotics and other controlled substances. But this is not a comprehensive drug tracking system. That is, it will only track the few identified medications that I talked about. The rest of them will continue to go untracked.

I am not clear if a health professional will be able to access this information in real time. I've asked the question twice and got a different answer, but I'm hoping to clarify this point soon, one way or another. I would hope that information would be available in real time. We know for a fact, and I know, that the system will send out alerts to health providers if they are concerned with the prescribing or the dispensing patterns for a specific patient, and that will be linked to their OHIP number to identify them.

Health providers all speak about the dire need to have a full system of drug information in Ontario, not just for narcotics but for all of the drugs in Ontario. This would allow physicians, nurse practitioners and dentists as well as pharmacists to make fully informed decisions. With the system proposed in Bill 101, health providers will continue to have only a partial view of their patients.

You have to realize that as it is right now, pharmacists often have a pretty good idea of what is being prescribed to who. They often are in a privileged position to see the prescribing patterns of different physicians, because they are the ones who fill the prescriptions. If you work in a community where you tend to fill prescriptions from the same physicians, you get to know their dispensing patterns. This knowledge is already there. Unfortunately, it has nowhere to go to improve this physician dispensing. We would hope that trends would be available to physicians so that they can see how they compare to their peers and they can see if their prescribing pattern is in line, higher or lower than their peers'. I'm not sure if that will be in, but I hope it will be.

We're talking about a database. Whenever we talk about health records, you can't help but think about eHealth and you can't help but think about the Auditor General and the \$1 billion spent on eHealth with not as much to show for it as we would have all liked. Had we had an electronic health record and had the \$1 billion given us an electronic health record, we wouldn't be here. We would already know who prescribes what and who receives what and who dispensed it, but we don't. So here we are, with Bill 101, creating a database and we all cross our fingers and toes that it will work, but this lack of electronic health records continues to paralyze our health care system and leaves Ontario patients at a disadvantage. How can health professionals make well-informed decisions when they only have a small piece of the information that is needed? I see that time is running. How could that be?

A little piece that I wanted to talk about was evaluation of Bill 101. The government has been totally silent on the standard by which they will be measuring the success of Bill 101. There are no achievables in there. How will we know if this bill has accomplished what it has set out to do?

There is significant concern that this could become a numbers game rather than really ensuring excellent health care for all. If people who are addicted to the drugs that are now being monitored simply switch to another drug, then the stats will look very good. I could see the headline: “The number of prescriptions for Oxy-Contin has gone down so many per cent, etc. etc.,” but the stats we're really interested in are how many people are struggling with addiction? How many people are struggling with chronic pain that is not being addressed? Those are the types of statistics that I would like to see linked in.

Primary care providers and pharmacists could become reluctant to prescribe and dispense narcotics, although we know that those drugs are effective. When they are well

monitored, well supervised, they help people with chronic pain. They also help people with acute pain. Many providers are already reluctant to provide access to these drugs, but we cannot forget that they are important medication to many Ontarians.

1530

So this bill could have two consequences—it could have many, but two that are quite obvious—one of them being that because we are shining a light on those medications, nobody will prescribe them anymore, and then you'll have this vacuum for people living with pain. Or the other way around: We are very successful in decreasing the number of those prescriptions, but we have no effect whatsoever on the number of addicts, who have simply switched to another drug.

Bill 101 is a step forward, but it is only one step in the many that need to be taken. The government announced a narcotics strategy with five elements in it that made it more comprehensive. In Bill 101, we only see the details of one of those five elements.

I've also talked about the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, which has put out their own report with 31 recommendations. One of their recommendations dealt with in Bill 101. The other 30—to have a comprehensive approach to narcotic misuse—are still lacking. Bill 101 is an important part of the puzzle, but it is but one part.

What is next? How is the government planning to move forward with a seamless system that ensures high-quality health care for Ontarians and a real safety net and basket of treatment services for Ontarians facing addiction? We still don't know.

In the select committee on mental health, the first part of our first recommendation is the creation of Mental Health and Addictions Ontario. Mental Health and Addictions Ontario would bring this comprehensive approach to those complex issues. I was happy to hear the minister talk about changing mental health and addictions. She talked about the right provider being closer to home, which is certainly in line with what the select committee on mental health was talking about when we were talking about addiction. I hope that those pieces of the strategy move forward with Bill 101 at the same time as the new database is created.

My colleague has said, and I will say the same, that we will support this bill and that we need to have extensive committee hearings on the bill. We need to hear the voices and advice of the many groups and individuals who are touched by these issues.

We especially need to hear people from the north and we need to hear First Nations communities. This bill will touch them with the creation of the database, and the monitoring of the prescribing and the dispensing, in a very different way. I've touched on it a bit. When you live in an isolated community, the person who prescribes is often the same person who dispenses, and this person comes maybe once a week, maybe once a month to your community. Those realities have to be taken into account if we want to make sure that the goal of this strategy—to

help the people of Ontario with the misuse of prescription narcotics—is to be felt equally by everybody in Ontario. The realities of the north, the realities of First Nations communities, are too far apart from the realities of an urban setting to not take the time to go and listen to them. They have creative solutions in line with Bill 101. They support Bill 101; I haven't heard any major opposition to it. It is a good start in the right direction, but it will have consequences for those communities that are completely different than those that we think about when we think about multiple doctors and multiple pharmacies. You need to listen to those people. You need to make sure that the bill will be as effective for them as it is to everybody else who lives in urban Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today. I certainly enjoyed the comments from the member from Nickel Belt, whom I spent a lot of time with over the past 18 months, along with the members from Whitby-Oshawa, Dufferin-Caledon, Oak Ridges-Markham and Peterborough.

It's interesting how this debate is going. We're not all saying the same thing—that would be boring if we did—but I think we're saying very similar things. The suggestions that are being offered to the minister are being offered in a constructive way. Certainly, the previous speaker said that we're off to a good start and we've made a good first step; I think she used that term. It's a pretty fast first step as well. This came out the day after we delivered our report. That was kind of nice to see, because I think it meant that we were all listening to the same people around the province of Ontario and the people around the province were saying the same things. We were all hearing the same things.

As urban members—or “suburban members”—would be a better way of putting it—we often relate drug problems to the urban setting. We think that drug problems are the problems of the inner city, and yet with OxyContin, Percodan and Percocet, we found out that actually this is a problem that plagues isolated communities and, surprisingly enough, also plagues rural communities. It's something you don't hear a lot about: drug problems in rural communities.

I'm hoping that as a good first step, as it has been put, this is going to put us on the right track towards a policy that all members of the House can agree is a way to move this issue forward in a way in which the people of Ontario really want to see this important issue dealt with.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The member from Nickel Belt made a number of interesting observations that, because I only have two minutes, I can't really comment on in depth, but I would just like to pick up on a couple of the points that she made. One is the idea that we need to come up with a comprehensive addictions strategy in Ontario, not just to deal with prescription drugs—the narcotics that are being prescribed, such as OxyContin

and Percocet—because that will only drive an addict into other kinds of medications, either non-prescription, like heroin, or other types of prescription meds. Just because you tighten the access to certain kinds of medications doesn't mean the addiction goes away; it just means that people turn to other kinds of drugs. We need to bear that in mind.

Also, the suggestion has been made that as we tighten down on restriction of some of these types of drugs, we will see an increase in the number of people seeking methadone treatment. I'm not in a position to say whether that's a good thing or a bad thing, but I think it is something that we need more information on, to understand whether that is really the best type of treatment for some of these addictions and something—if we did create Mental Health and Addictions Ontario, the umbrella organization that has been recommended by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions—that we'd be able to pursue, and bring the experts together to understand best practices in treatment of all kinds of addiction, so that we would know whether something like methadone is the best course of action to follow in order to treat this kind of addiction.

The other issue that she mentioned is the need to use culturally appropriate services, particularly for First Nations communities. I would certainly echo that. Some of the practices that are being brought forward in many of the communities are really in conjunction with the elders, with the nursing community and members who live in those communities, and are the best treatment programs and have the most chance for success.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I listened very carefully to the comments by the member from Nickel Belt. Now everybody understands why we're so very proud of her role as health critic. She presented to this chamber a very fair, thorough, intelligent and balanced analysis not only of the bill but of the issues that it purports to address. If anything, there was an imbalance of non-partisanship, which I intend to correct when the rotation comes around to the modest 20 minutes that will be allowed me.

1540

This has been framed very much in the context of addictions. I suppose that's the nub of it: If these particular prescription drugs weren't addictive, the problem wouldn't exist. That has caused me, then, to reflect on the broader issue of addictions. Perhaps the member from Nickel Belt gave you some forewarning of where my focus might be, but we'll wait, because the member for Nickel Belt will be responding and then the rotation will go.

I don't expect there to be a lengthy second reading debate on this. Our goal here in the NDP—and Ms. Gélinas, the member for Nickel Belt, our health critic, has referred to it—is to get this bill out into the community. We've got a very narrow window here. The member for Nickel Belt made it very clear that some of those communities that are most impacted by this crisis are rural commu-

ities, remote communities, and that means those northern native communities. The government has an opportunity now to demonstrate to those northern communities and those northern native communities that they are part of this government's Ontario and that this government, this Parliament, is interested enough in their problems in those remote native communities which have suffered so much that it's prepared to send its committee to those communities. Perhaps the October break would be the most appropriate time, wouldn't it?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: There's no question: The member from Nickel Belt brings tremendous insight to this particular topic. I certainly considered it a privilege, along with others, to have the opportunity to serve with her on the select committee looking at mental health issues.

I only have a minute plus to recount the visit that we all made to Sandy Lake. We heard the young chief and his band council at Sandy Lake tell us, in very emotional, passionate terms, about the amount of OxyContin and Percocet that got smuggled into his particular First Nation community via Winnipeg, and the actions that he took as chief to try to cut off that supply of OxyContin and Percocet that was coming from pharmacies from Winnipeg, which is the closest regional centre to Sandy Lake. We saw parents of children who were clearly addicted, using their fairly meagre financial resources to acquire these two prescription drugs, and the impact that it had on families within the community. The member from Whitby–Oshawa touched upon the use of healing circles and sweat lodges to try to deal with this particular problem.

I happen to think this bill presents a unique opportunity for this Legislature to come together to put together a really substantive piece of legislation that I believe could have a very profound impact on many communities across this wonderful province, but particularly these isolated communities, First Nations communities, in north-western and northeastern Ontario, and indeed rural communities throughout Ontario. We have a real opportunity to get this right.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Nickel Belt has up to two minutes to respond.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'll start by thanking the member from Oakville for his comments. Yes, it is a first step, and I think it is a first step that everybody agrees needs to be done, so let's move on with it.

The second is the member from Whitby–Oshawa talking about the need for culturally appropriate treatment. We know that as supply decreases, people with addiction will turn toward treatment, will seek out help. It doesn't matter how the help will come to them. Whether it be quitting cold turkey or having a support system of counselling in place, some form of support, help and therapy that works has to be there to help them manage this difficult period when you get rid of your addiction.

I'll thank the member for Welland for the nice compliment. He only does it in the House, so I take them when they come.

To the member from Peterborough, I was there when Chief Adam Fiddler talked to us about some of the families, saying they couldn't give them money because they used it for drugs, so they started giving them vouchers, but they would sell the vouchers and buy drugs. So they started giving them food so they wouldn't sell the vouchers, but they sold the food to buy drugs. At the end of the day, it always ended with 12 little children hungry and empty cupboards and an empty fridge in the house, if they still had a house. So, yes, we need to move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It certainly is a pleasure to rise today in support of Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances. I'm particularly pleased because it gives the members of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions an opportunity to speak not only on this important bill but also to talk about what we heard during the time we served on the select committee.

I do share the impatience that my colleagues, in particular the member from Whitby—Oshawa and the member from Nickel Belt, have expressed in seeing the 22 recommendations we made brought forward to this House and acted upon. Having said that, Bill 101 is clearly an important first step. It is our recommendation 11, and I hope the fact that it was introduced by the minister so speedily bodes well for the rest of our recommendations.

In talking about addictions, I always like to look back at the definition of what we are talking about. I found one that I think is worth repeating here: An addiction is "a primary, chronic neurobiological disease with genetic, psychosocial, and environmental factors influencing its development and manifestations." Clearly, with this bill, we are influencing the environmental factors that lead to addiction in our attempt, here, to restrict access to prescription narcotics.

Addiction is a very complex issue. It is influenced by genetic factors; it's influenced by psychosocial factors. During our time on the select committee, it was very clear that the whole issue of mental health and addictions was very intertwined. This is why, with our recommendation for an overarching body to focus on these issues, we feel we have the best chance of success. So I would acknowledge some of the comments made regarding a future more comprehensive approach, and I'm sure the minister is looking very closely at these types of recommendations.

It's important to understand the issue of dependence: why people keep needing their substance. In other words, this is a physical manifestation that occurs. When someone starts taking an addictive substance, they gradually reach a state of adaptation, and when the substance is withdrawn, they actually have a physical manifestation. So, if you stop the addictive drug or rapidly reduce the dose, you will find that you have certain symptoms. You

will need the substance to regain your sense of equilibrium—the type of relaxation qualities, a sense of peace, sometimes enthusiasm. You will physically need to get back into that state and this, of course, is what drives addicts to secure by any means the substance they've become addicted to.

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People become tolerant to addictive substances, so that it requires ever-increasing doses to achieve the same sensations that they find help them in coping, very often, with their daily lives.

The history of addictions is instructive as well. Obviously, since time immemorial, people have relied on alcohol to give them the sensations of relaxation and energy and the pleasurable effects that are associated with addictive substances. In fact, I think perhaps members will remember the opium dens of the stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who was actually a physician, he who penned the famous Sherlock Holmes series of stories. Very often, Sherlock Holmes, in his investigations of various crimes in those stories, went into the opium dens of London down by the Thames. The clear association with criminal activity was recognized more than 100-and-some years ago—that the effects of opium would often release some of the secrets that were needed for Sherlock Holmes to conclude his investigations.

We know that opioids, these narcotics in particular, have played a role in our society for centuries. So it is hardly surprising that we have had what I would describe as a chronic problem with narcotics. When I was first in practice as a physician—I first practised in what I think we would describe as a suburban type of situation—I saw many people with painful conditions. I became quite used to prescribing pain medication. I was, I think, relatively well trained by the University of Toronto in those days, and I certainly knew that Tylenol 3 was an addictive substance. As the condition for which they were receiving the medication improved, I was very firm on tapering the doses and making sure that people ceased to use these addictive products and had relatively little difficulty in doing so.

After a few years, I moved to downtown Toronto. I was on staff at Women's College Hospital. Suddenly, I was seeing a very different type of practice. As a young physician, I was seen as someone whom those addicted to opioids, to narcotics, could rely upon perhaps to prescribe more easily. All of a sudden, I was seeing people with various painful conditions—usually low back pain—coming in, demanding certain painkillers by name, very insistent that they weren't improving and so on. I realized I was seeing a number of people who were severely addicted. It was only when I decided that I needed to cease the prescriptions that suddenly all these new patients who had come flocking to my office disappeared and presumably went elsewhere.

We do have a situation currently in Ontario that I think the member for Nickel Belt actually referred to where physicians are at a stage where they're concerned that because they might be suspected of overprescribing narcot-

ics, they underprescribe, and people with very genuine painful conditions are going undertreated. So we clearly need a balance here to address both sides.

I'm going to quote now from Angela Mailis-Gagnon, who is the director of the comprehensive pain program, senior investigator at the Krembil Neuroscience Centre at the Toronto Western Hospital and a professor of the department of medicine, University of Toronto. She says:

"As a doctor practising for 28 years exclusively in the area of chronic non-cancer pain ... I have used powerful analgesics such as opioids in an effort to reduce my patients' pain. While their use in treating cancer pain is well accepted, treating chronic non-cancer pain "with opioids remains a hot and at times controversial topic. Today, we have come to witness a difficult situation in North America, where thousands of patients who could be helped are not prescribed opioids, while on the other hand we have seen significant increase in abuse and misuse of opioids."

What does Bill 101 do in terms of achieving this balanced situation? As has been stated, there are, in fact, five key elements to the strategy that our government is putting forward.

First of all, the proposed monitoring database and proposed legislation to ensure that that database is created: We know that we need good data. It's always the first step. I know, as a member of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, that we had a great deal of trouble getting what we felt were truly reliable data on a number of topics. So this type of electronic database is going to be extremely helpful.

I notice today that both the Globe and Mail and the National Post reported on the Health Council of Canada's report that specifically mentioned the inappropriate prescribing of drugs as a major issue. So here we are in Ontario certainly attempting to redress that situation.

Once we have the appropriate database, of course there is also a need for education. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario is the regulatory body for physicians. And I must say, they have, over the years, attempted to ensure that physicians are educated in the issue of appropriate prescribing.

Again, Professor Mailis-Gagnon states: "Since 1996 I have been involved with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) in the 2000 evidence-based recommendations for treatment of chronic non-malignant pain, as well as the Canadian Guideline for Safe and Effective Use of Opioids for Chronic Non-Cancer Pain, a product of the National Opioid Use Guideline Group for Canada." During the same period, she has taught the CPSO prescribing skills course, a University of Toronto course, for appropriate prescribing of opioids to family practitioners.

So clearly, the education has been available. Unfortunately, we seem to be faced with a situation where only a certain number of physicians have taken advantage of those guidelines. In fact, it was an interesting statistic that I read from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in looking at the Ontario disability support program data-

base on the prescription of narcotics: Apparently, 75% of those prescriptions are prescribed by only 20% of family physicians. So there are certainly some who seem to be needing a more intensive educational effort. This type of database and bringing to their attention the amount of prescriptions not only that they perhaps have prescribed but other physicians have prescribed to the same patient will be extremely important.

The next element is partnering with the health care sector to educate on appropriate dispensing. My understanding is that there has been extensive consultation with the College of Pharmacists as well as the Ontario Pharmacists' Association. Definitely, pharmacists are a second line of defence. The physician may be the primary gatekeeper in writing a prescription, but pharmacists, as some of our colleagues have noted, are in an excellent position also to be aware of patients who keep coming back for the same prescription, maybe from different physicians.

General public education in terms of the excessive use of prescription narcotics: I think it was the member for Guelph who talked about someone who, after a serious surgery, is given a prescription and really perhaps is not aware of the addictive effects of that particular prescription. Certainly in most practices, I would think it would be a basic requirement that the physician inform the patient, as well as the pharmacist in giving and dispensing the medication, to give individuals that kind of information, but some general awareness campaign is also going to be extremely useful.

Then, of course, we do come to the treatment of addictions. At the select committee level, we were, I think, overwhelmed by the stories in terms of the waiting required for treatment of addictions.

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Just this summer, a friend of mine phoned; it was 7 a.m. and I knew, seeing his name pop up, that it had to be pretty much a life-and-death matter if he was phoning me. He told me a very sad and difficult story. Thank heavens he ignored the potential stigma around the situation. He had just that previous evening received a phone call from his son, who is a talented artist and was travelling—this was the first that he and his wife had heard of this situation—saying, "Dad, I'm addicted to drugs. I need help." This particular friend of mine phoned me hoping that I would know how to help his son get help in a timely fashion. Having had the experience of being on the select committee, I knew that the options were going to be extremely limited, extremely difficult. That individual did end up going to the emergency department. He was in such a desperate state. He conveyed that urgency in the emergency room and he was very fortunate to be given an appointment one month later at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. He was so determined to fight his addiction that, in fact, he felt that he could wait that long.

I think we all recognize that in very urgent states, very urgent situations, people deserve care in a timely manner. It's certainly one of the areas that, as a member of the

select committee, we know that this is not happening in the way that we all would wish.

Treatment for addictions also, as has been mentioned, utilizes methadone as a way of at least trying to counteract the other addiction to the other opioid. Methadone itself is an opioid but is less harmful. I was thinking, as the member for Nickel Belt was talking, that the transfer of an addiction from one substance to an addiction to another is of course a potentially very important side effect of what we are proposing with our Bill 101. We clearly need to look at the issue of addictions in a comprehensive way. We need Bill 101 as an excellent first step. It is one that I feel confident will reduce dependence on this particular class of substances, but we still have all the illegal substances that are available and, of course, that tried and true addiction, alcohol. Some people get involved with problem gambling. That is a little different in that it is not an ingested substance, but is equally important.

I certainly believe that in moving forward with this bill we are doing something that is required. The regulatory colleges with their members—the physicians, the pharmacists—have been attempting to provide educational facilities, but physicians tend to be extremely busy people; pharmacists can be quite overwhelmed at times as well. Having a database that records all that is actually happening, the appointment of inspectors to ensure that appropriate prescriptions are being written: This is all a very important part of the strategy, and I anticipate we will be having some very positive results.

The debate here today I think is showing that all members can support this bill without reservation. It is something that has been the subject of considerable discussion. Reference was made to the minister's advisory panel on narcotics. It's a 12-member panel comprised of all the appropriate stakeholders—and this is only the first piece of their work. They were just established in, I think, March 2009. They are going to look at the comprehensive issues around narcotic use in the broadest sense, and that will certainly include the use of illegal drugs and the whole issue of chronic pain management, which has been alluded to.

We certainly do not see that the appropriate use of narcotics should disappear. They're excellent drugs, if used for the correct purpose. But what we have as a situation here in Ontario, as described by the minister and her parliamentary assistant, is absolutely intolerable. The rapid escalation of use must be stopped, and this is a good step forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I am pleased to respond to the member from Oak Ridges–Markham. She was on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions with me, and I think we know all too well, because of our work on that committee and also because of our work in our various constituencies and in the ridings, what an escalating problem this particular prescription narcotics addiction has become in our communities. As a phy-

sician, she has raised some important aspects that maybe the non-doctors among us wouldn't be aware of. It was a good perspective to bring to this debate.

I think she was absolutely right when she ended her debate by saying that this is a good start. There is no doubt in my mind that this is a good beginning and will hopefully lead to fewer individuals becoming addicted to prescription narcotics. It is only the first step of what I think is going to be a long journey of prevention, treatment and, ultimately, ensuring that those prescription drugs are going to the people who need them, and who need them for pain management, and that we try as much as possible, from a government standpoint, to limit the illegal use of narcotics and prescription drugs.

It was, as always, an informative discussion brought by the member from Oak Ridges–Markham. I appreciate her perspective and look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: First of all, let me be very, very clear: I like the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, and I'm impressed at her sincere enthusiasm to tackle gambling and other addiction problems head-on. She referenced gambling addiction and she identified it as being as addictive a thing as addictions to these prescription drugs, which this bill purports to address.

I understand her enthusiasm about being on the committee. I just wonder if she's aware of what gambling expert Dr. Robert Williams testified to in a recent Superior Court case of Dennis and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. "Among the opinions Dr. Williams provided on the basis of his research and experience were that, apart from biological and psychological factors, contributing factors to the likelihood that a person would engage in problem gambling include:

"(i) the availability of electronic gambling machines which because of high rates of reinforcement, illusion of control and deceptive 'near miss' features, are the most addictive forms of gambling;

"(ii) erroneous beliefs about how gambling works, and the probabilities of success;

"(iii) the ready availability of funds through nearby automated cash machines; and

"(iv) ineffectual self-exclusion programs."

It sounds an awful lot like Internet gambling to me; it sounds an awful lot like Poker Lotto; it sounds an awful lot like the proliferation of slot machines in racetracks across the province; and it sounds an awful lot like this government's most recent policy announcements. So I trust that the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, who I like, will join me in trying to persuade her government to abandon the folly of Internet gambling and Poker Lotto—as addictive and dangerous a thing as any Oxy-Contin tablet.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Of course I would commend our Minister of Health, the government initiative and, in

particular, my physician parliamentary colleague the member from Oak Ridges–Markham. I appreciate the remarks of the member from Dufferin–Caledon when she spoke about non-doctors or the undoctored offering comments on this particular bill.

I must just say, before talking specifically about the bill, that I think I'm detecting from the MPP from Welland, along, of course, with his usual theatrical presentation, a scarcity of relevant notes. He seems to be repeating a theme—it's kind of like near misses—a little bit tangential to the particular debate at hand.

Of course there's a very important issue here before us: the appropriate use of narcotics for particular conditions. I have to say that some balance must be brought—of course, that's encapsulated within this particular bill—because, as you'll very well know, there are about four million Canadians who have osteoarthritis who actually suffer from chronic pain. There is a huge category of patients, whether post-surgical, post-accident or for various other conditions that are brought to them, who actually live with chronic, debilitating pain that essentially robs them of the colour of life.

So I'm glad to see that this bill—of course it's very important to remove the long-term addiction and addiction potential, whether it's by pharmacists, by physicians or by, as mentioned here, organized crime, with the level of trafficking, but also to remain balanced so that the individuals who really do medically merit these particular medications will continue to receive them, of course at the appropriate dosing, the appropriate schedule and with a timed review, because ultimately our goal collectively, whether as parliamentarians or, in some cases, as physicians, is to better the health and prosperity of our fellow citizens.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have a chance to respond to the comments by the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, and I'd like to use my time to ask her a question. My question would be, would she agree that the failure of the government's eHealth strategy, where \$1 billion was spent with little to show for it in the end—hundreds of millions of dollars wasted—would she agree that if the eHealth initiative had succeeded, we wouldn't even be talking about this bill today?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Oak Ridges–Markham has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to thank my colleague from Dufferin–Caledon and even my colleagues from Welland, Etobicoke North and Wellington–Halton Hills. Clearly, in pursuing some somewhat peripheral matters, they must be in support of Bill 101.

I think it's worth repeating some of the statistics that relate specifically to the use of prescription opioids, and I think we need to really reflect on this. Between 1991 and 2009, prescriptions for narcotics containing oxycodone, like Percocet and OxyContin, rose by more than 900%, and since 2004, some scant six years ago, the number of

oxycodone-related deaths in Ontario has nearly doubled. I don't think we could see that with any other particular addiction. These are really catastrophic numbers. I'm thinking in terms, obviously, of human suffering and misery, the cost to the taxpayer through the Ontario disability support program—funding of these prescription narcotics has, again, been astronomical.

I think it's without question that narcotics are being over-prescribed, being overused and being obtained illegally and sold on the street for profit while the people who buy them are getting sick and dying. This situation cannot be allowed to continue. That's why the five key elements of our narcotics strategy will save lives and improve health outcomes for Ontarians by stopping abuse, addiction and diversion of narcotics and controlled substances while ensuring that patients who need pain treatment get it.

As a physician and as a parliamentarian, I totally support Bill 101.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to join the debate of Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances. It's a known fact that drug abuse in Ontario is an urgent and rapidly growing problem that needs to be addressed.

I'm going to take a page from the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, because I think he has raised a very salient point: Would we need Bill 101 if electronic health records were a reality in Ontario today? The question seems pretty obvious to me. When Bill 101 goes to committee, I hope that there is an opportunity and some time set aside for the scenario as we roll out eHealth, if it actually gets on the ground in Ontario. What is going to happen with Bill 101? Are we once again going to have two separate systems and two separate reporting mechanisms? I would have concerns if that was the case, and that's essentially what we're setting up—duplicate records.

This bill is set up to create a narcotics tracking database that will monitor, analyze and report information, including personal information, related to the prescription and dispensing of narcotic drugs. This will identify use/misuse, abuse, and the diversion of narcotics. What it will not do is track illegally made prescription narcotics. It will not track illegally acquired prescription drugs. We have all heard of the drug houses, the operations that are set up in basements, in storage facilities, where they are literally churning out these drugs to be sold on the street, and Bill 101 is not going to do anything to deal with that problem that we are seeing in our communities across Ontario.

Prescribers are going to have to record specific information on narcotic drugs, and dispensers will ensure that identity verification requirements are met prior to dispensing the drug. Essentially, what that means is that you will have to prove who you are, and it will be tracked by the dispensing pharmacist. I was surprised, when I spoke to the Minister of Health, who gave me a heads-up on

this bill, that in fact that is not occurring in Ontario today. Even with people who carry drug plans and the Ontario drug benefit plan, there currently is nothing in place that allows the drug holders to see who is using these drugs and who is getting them, because obviously that is a first step in trying to find where the abuse is happening.

While Bill 101 is certainly a step in the right direction, it doesn't do much to address the problem as it exists right now in our communities. This is definitely a preventative measure, and I applaud the minister for trying to proactively deal with fewer people getting addicted. It is a preventative measure only. There are thousands of individuals who are addicted to prescription narcotic drugs right now who will benefit in no way from Bill 101.

There is no reference to treatment. There is no reference to any kind of assistance for people who are addicted right now. My concern would be that we move from one addictive substance to another. When you're addicted, you will find something to serve that addiction, whether it's a prescription drug or something that you find on the streets that has been manufactured in a basement. We have to get to the core problem of treating the individuals who are already addicted, and I would hope that as we move beyond Bill 101, we actually start getting into true substantive discussions about how we are going to assist people who have those addictions right now. This bill does not address detox, therapies, counselling or treatment of any kind for those already suffering with an addiction, and without the proper treatment and services for those already with the addiction, it's quite possible that they will switch to a different drug.

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I know a number of the speakers have made reference to the select committee's work on mental health and addictions and our final report that came out at the end of August, but there was a particularly telling presentation that we were given the honour of learning about. That was at the Sandy Lake First Nation. I'm going to read to you from a section of their presentation because it really hits home just how deeply this problem is affecting their community, and this community is not unique. Five or 10 years ago you did not see signs on pharmacies that said, "We do not carry prescription narcotics." The prevalence that is happening in rural, northern and remote communities is, quite frankly, frightening.

This is from our visit to Sandy Lake First Nation. It starts with, "You have come to Sandy Lake at a very crucial time. As you may know, prescription drug addiction is a big problem in so many First Nation communities, and ours is no different. We have received strong, clear direction from our elders and community members that we take immediate action to combat this affliction that has such a strong hold on so many lives.

"We have been very fortunate to have a group of front-line workers and community members who are dedicated to developing and implementing a variety of programs, policies and activities to help the community deal with addiction. We have also worked side by side

with law enforcement authorities to crack down on the trafficking and illegal sales of prescription drugs....

"Prescription drug addiction to OxyContin and Percocets affects many people in Sandy Lake, and the addiction is far more gripping and debilitating than any other drug we've ever known. Withdrawal is recognized to be" so "much more difficult and prolonged, lasting months and years.

"Although these appear to be legitimate medications prescribed by doctors and dispensed by pharmacists, it is a much more serious problem. They are brought in from the city and sold as a street drug. It is crushed into a powder and either snorted or melted into a liquid and injected into the veins. The current price of an 80 mg tablet of OxyContin in Sandy Lake is \$320." That was actually one year ago last August, so it may have gone up since then—\$320.

"This epidemic is affecting unsuspecting community members and their families whose lives, employment, financial security, emotional stability, quality of life and health are seriously impacted by their addiction.

"We did a community assessment to determine how many people were using these drugs. We discovered that 372 people were habitual users. The youngest user was 14 years old and the oldest was 45 years old. The average age of the users are between the ages 25 and 35."

The Chief, Adam Fiddler, goes on to describe some of the proactive things that they have been attempting in Sandy Lake. One, of course, I made reference to earlier, where they took funds and purchased a drug-sniffing dog, and they were able to decrease the amount of illegally acquired drugs in the community. The problem was, because people were so severely addicted, all it did was increase the street value of those that were able to get through. At that point the band council understood that you needed to do more than just try to limit what was out there and on the street and people were getting. You needed to actually treat the problem.

The other thing that they did, again, proactively, without any additional funds from any level of government, was start some treatment programs. We could have some interesting discussions and debates about how effective those were, but the reality was, they saw the problem in their community and they were trying different solutions on how to solve it. Some of them incorporated some traditional healing methods, and a lot of it, quite frankly—again, because of the location and the remoteness of Sandy Lake—was based on peer support and walking people through it. It became a very long-term process, and he makes reference to the withdrawal lasting months and years.

What we haven't talked a lot about, with this drug abuse going up so much, is the question of why. A number of speakers talked about how the increase has gone up fivefold over the course of a number of very short years. You have to, again, look at the core, the base: Why is that? One of the things, again, that we were able to learn, through the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, was that many people who have mental

health issues actually self-medicate, and that self-medication becomes another addiction. So not only are you dealing with a mental health problem, but you're also dealing with an addiction problem. I guess that's why you see speaker after speaker come back to it's not just cherry-picking one recommendation out of 23 from the final report. You need to look at the entire program—well, I use the word “program” loosely, because I question whether there is any kind of cohesiveness to our mental health and addictions strategies in Ontario right now. But I believe that part of the reason we're having these issues with prescription narcotics is because we're not dealing with many of the mental health illnesses that are within our communities, and people are self-medicating.

The other thing I wanted to talk about briefly is that we're not plowing new fields here. There are other provinces that have actually been able to react and been able to set up a program—in particular, I'll use the example of Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia has a program that includes legislation, monitoring, education and support for patients and health care professionals and which is now being followed in New Brunswick. Other provinces, including British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, have triplicate prescription programs. To date—you know, we always want to talk about, “You've put the program in place; what has actually occurred as a result? Has there been a change? Has there been a decrease? Have there been more people funnelled into treatment programs?” To date, both Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia have reported a decrease in narcotics use.

But if you look at the Nova Scotia program, it includes education and support for patients and health care professionals. I question whether Bill 101 has that kind of depth in it. Absolutely, it's got the tracking component, and I think that will help in the long run to decrease the number of people who are getting addicted. But where's the education and support for people who need to know what their alternatives are if they're not going to look into narcotics? Where is the physician support that says you don't always have to prescribe a painkiller narcotic? We need to have those other components in order to ensure that we have a program that is going to serve all of our community and is not just another tracking, not just another database. I don't want to see our health resources, which are always pressed to the limit, be used only for databasing who's prescribing the drugs and who's using the drugs. I want it to go beyond that. I want to see the other side of it, which is: Where is the help coming from? Where is the treatment coming from? How do we actually assist people? I think that's a very important part of Bill 101 that, unfortunately, I believe, is missing.

If you look at the explanatory notes, it talks about how this act will:

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“(a) contribute to and promote appropriate prescribing and dispensing practices for monitored drugs in order to support access to monitored drugs for medically appro-

priate treatment, including treatment for pain”—no one is going to argue with that. We all know that there are certain illnesses and issues that are going to need these prescription painkillers.

“(b) identify and reduce the abuse, misuse and diversion of monitored drugs”—which, of course, all tracks back to why you need the database, but it is only one part of it.

“(c) reduce the risk of addiction and death resulting from the abuse or misuse of monitored drugs”—a wonderful statement that nobody is going to argue with.

We've already said that we're going to support Bill 101. I don't have any qualms with its desire to try to decrease the number of people who are becoming addicted or have the potential to be addicted, but I'm going to keep coming back to some of the information that we were learning from our work in the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. If people are self-medicating by using some of these prescription narcotics because they're trying to manage their mental health issues, then don't we have an obligation as a government and the Ministry of Health to actually go a little further back and say, “How do we help? How do we assist people before it becomes an addiction to narcotic drugs?”

I think that if the government is willing to let those issues come forward in a fulsome debate—

Interjection.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: —in a full debate at the committee level, where we can actually bring in the experts and get some of these questions answered, then I would be happy to continue to support Bill 101, but we do need to listen to the communities directly affected, and we do need to hear from experts on how the concepts behind Bill 101 can actually work on the ground.

To finish up: With the \$1 billion that so far has been used on electronic health records that we still do not have, I would love to have some full discussion on what the long-term plans are for this database. Is there going to be a duplicate in the eHealth records? Is there a plan for combining the two at some point? I think we need to have those questions answered, and I look forward to that discussion when we get to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member for Dufferin—Caledon has been a very capable commentator on this matter in the course of the second reading debate of this bill, and I listened to her carefully.

I find once again, as I have before, that it's always not just a pleasure, but incredibly informative, to listen to the member for Dufferin—Caledon. She, like other opposition members, has been incredibly generous to the government. I suppose it's because the member has a passion for addressing the incredibly important issue of drug addiction, and I suppose it's because the member, like our health critic, is prepared to grasp at anything that may help to address that. I hope that the Conservative caucus—I'm confident that they do—share our passion for this to go out to committee. It's imperative.

I can anticipate some of the arguments being made by the honourable government House leader to the effect that, "Oh well, the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions already considered all of these matters." No; these are two totally different things. The committee did some very good work, and the work was so good that I was disappointed it was given but an hour and a half of debate after the report was presented to the House. I couldn't imagine why they shouldn't have received a complete debate or a full one.

But this is an incredibly different issue. This involves pharmacists, it involves doctors as prescribers, it involves the necessary technology and it involves the community in a very different way than a broad consideration of addictions and mental health did. We feel very, very strongly that especially those remote, northern and native communities have to have the presence of the committee with respect to Bill 101.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to comment on the remarks by the member from Dufferin-Caledon. I must say that I'm a little bit disappointed to hear the member from Dufferin-Caledon and the member from Wellington-Halton Hills trying to make it sound like this is some sort of an eHealth issue. In fact, the reason for this legislation has nothing to do with eHealth. Pharmacies actually already submit information about prescriptions, but only in the cases of people who are on the Ontario drug benefit.

The legislation that currently exists requiring pharmacies to submit that information says that the government can only use that for the purpose of billing. What this legislation allows is for the government to use the information, which already exists in the case of Ontario drug benefit users, for the purpose of tracking to identify inappropriate use. We currently have no legal authority to collect the information from pharmacists when the person is not on the Ontario drug benefit. This also authorizes us to collect the information from pharmacies.

This has nothing to do with eHealth. What it does have to do with is authorizing the government to track inappropriate use, and that's only one component of the strategy. The narcotics strategy which has been suggested by the Narcotics Advisory Panel in fact already does cover a number of the items the member requested. It does include education for the people who are doing the prescribing; it does include education for the people who are doing the dispensing; it does include education for patients; and it does include further strengthening treatment and addiction services in Ontario. It's just that those other components do not require legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Let me be clear: This bill has a lot to do with eHealth, because eHealth wasted \$1 billion of taxpayers' money, and if eHealth had been implemented properly, this bill would have been redundant; this would have been done by eHealth. Further to that, the

government claims that the registry will cost \$1 million. This registry will cost \$1 million, but the track record of this government would suggest that they could probably add at least two zeros to that million dollars before they bring that in, before it becomes operational. Of course, the Courtyard folks will have to have a go at it as well.

Considering the government's track record—they say that it's going to be implemented within a year. Given this government's track record, that probably means five years and \$100 billion, and maybe they'll get the job done, because that's what happened with eHealth. eHealth is what this is all about; eHealth was so messed up, so overspent, so confused that the ability of this government to manage anything in this sector is really highly questionable, very highly questionable.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Peterborough.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Let me also be very clear: This is a bill that we will support. I believe we will be supporting this bill—that being said, providing it goes to committee and providing that committee travels extensively, particularly in the north, where the committee saw the amount of abuse that drugs are being put to in the north and why this committee has to travel there. That's what this bill is all about: the waste of \$1 billion at eHealth and the ridiculous numbers that you say you're going to bring it in on.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to make comments to what the member from Dufferin-Caledon had to say—

Interjections.

M^{me} France Gélinas: —but really, I would like to comment on his comments, but I'll refrain.

The member from Dufferin-Caledon talked about her experience when she was in Sandy Lake.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Could we stop the clock for a minute?

I've asked the member from Peterborough. I'm going to ask him again for the second time. Thank you.

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M^{me} France Gélinas: The member from Dufferin-Caledon talked about her experience when we went to Sandy Lake. Sandy Lake was but one of the First Nations that is having a tough time with OxyContin, Percocet and all the other narcotics. She talked about a number of people that Chief Adam Fiddler shared with us. I've had the opportunity to travel through much of that part of the north. When you go to communities like Pikangikum or Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug or some of the other First Nations, you will see that somewhere around 70% of the residents—we're talking thousands of people—have an addiction. The problem is huge.

The First Nations have their own challenge, and Bill 101 cannot be applied to them the same way it will be applied to the rest of the province. So, I certainly support

her request that the committee take the time to travel and explain: "Here's what Bill 101 will do. How can we make this a reality in your community, where electricity is hard to come by, Internet connection is off more often than it's on, and your prescribers are in your community and the drugs come from another community, often thousands of kilometres away, where there is a pharmacy. The whole system is different. They have to be taken into account.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Dufferin—Caledon has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the members from Welland, Guelph, Halton and Nickel Belt. I had to laugh when the member from Welland said we're appreciative of what the government is bringing forward. I think the words were, "We'll grasp at anything," and he's absolutely right: It isn't often that the government comes forward with a suggestion that we're willing to support. But we're prepared to do that with Bill 101, assuming, as I said, that we get some public hearings that actually talk to and hear from the communities most directly affected.

I can't repeat enough that you must listen to the communities and how they have been devastated by prescription drug addictions. We would be losing an incredible opportunity to hear from experts and people who are actually living the nightmare if we do not use this opportunity to have travelling public hearings into rural Ontario and the north. I'm going to leave with that final plea and hope that the government House leader is actually listening and willing to be open to that opportunity. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate? The member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. First, New Democrats will be supporting this bill on second reading. We do not expect a protracted debate on second reading. Our goal, like that of the other opposition caucus, is to get this bill into committee and get that committee out, possibly even during the October break, particularly into those northern and native communities that have been identified by all participants, and by themselves, as having a particular crisis when it comes to addictions, and when it comes to addictions to the prescription drugs contemplated by Bill 101.

I was so pleased this morning when the Speaker announced that question period is going to be on demand on the Legislative Assembly website. The website for Ontario Legislature, of course, is ontla.on.ca. I suspect that most people watching this broadcast are watching it on cable. I've got to tell you that just before I came into the House, I spent an hour and 15 minutes with Rogers, who have the crappiest customer service that anybody could ever imagine. I encourage people who have Rogers Cable to cancel it and go with a satellite dish. You'll save money, you'll save grief. I mean, I need a Valium—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock for a minute.

I trust that the member, taking his usual scenic route, will touch down on Bill 101 in a minute. Thank you.

Mr. Peter Kormos: And I'll be finished with Rogers, I suppose, in a lifetime. An hour and 15 minutes on the phone. Incredibly unresponsive, obtuse, arrogant, dismissive—I just can't believe the CRTC allows that company to even exist.

But I want to talk about Bill 101 and encourage people to watch, because it's the question period on demand. The Speaker's got eight days of question period; people can go back up to eight days, so I encourage people to use that resource.

The bill's interesting. The bill is being promoted as part of a broad anti-addictions or addictions strategy by the government. Okay, it's a part. It's a very, very, very small part.

Oh, I also wanted to congratulate the minister because she showed great style in being here through the leads of the opposition parties. That's a tradition that I'm proud to see her maintain. Her parliamentary assistant is monitoring the balance of the debate, and I have great regard for that. That's a tradition that somehow has not always been the practice. So I commend the minister and her parliamentary assistant for being dutiful around this matter and treating it, I trust, with the seriousness that it deserves.

The bill doesn't really achieve that much. I agree that it overcomes the privacy hurdle. It's not that the data isn't out there; it's out there. Workers' comp has data, I presume, about the treatment for people who are being treated under the workers' comp realm; OHIP has data, but that data is protected, and so on. This, in effect, circumvents the privacy issues, but only around that certain class of pharmaceuticals, that certain class of drugs, and I don't know how broad-ranging it is. People mention Percocet, OxyContin. I mentioned Valium because I needed one after that hour and 15 minutes with the call centre, with Rogers Cable. I needed two Valiums. I don't know the range. I presume Valium could well be considered because it has, I understand, some street market value.

But the bill only involves three parties: It involves doctors—they call them prescribers—it involves pharmacists, and it involves the ministry. That's it. And the powers are, quite frankly, very limited. The bill requires doctors, as prescribers, to collect certain information. It does not require them to maintain that information for the two-year minimum that pharmacists are required to maintain the information. I don't know the explanation for that. I presume that the presumption is that the doctor's files contain that information, but I also suspect that it's one thing for the government to say this bill entitles them to access to a separate database that a doctor may maintain, either in paper form or in computer form, as compared to accessing patients' files. It's my view that an argument, a strong argument, may be made that the power to inspect the data that the doctor was required to record does not include the power to go into a patient's

file, because other data would be apparent then to the inspector.

We don't see the guideline here. We don't see "the doctor must maintain a separate registry of the data," the seven points that have to be recorded. So that's an interesting wrinkle. I don't know whether the ministry and their staff have thoughts about that. I suspect they do. It's something we could find out in committee.

The pharmacists, similarly, must record information—obtain it and record it, eight items—and retain records of that information for not less than two years.

Now, the real nub of this is, I suspect, when you take a look at subsection 8(2): "A prescriber, dispenser or operator of a pharmacy"—that's the doctor or the pharmacy—"shall disclose the information in subsection (1)," which is the information that's required to be recorded in those two sections that deal, one, with doctors as prescribers and, secondly, with pharmacists as dispensers, "in the form and manner that the minister or the executive officer directs." I suspect that that's the nub of the whole issue: "in the form or manner." That could well be the minister saying, "Okay, this is the form and manner, folks." This data is going to be recorded on your computer terminal and submitted at the end of each working day—or each week; I have no idea.

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All I think of now, though, is the incredible role that Tom Jakobek can play in coordinating the acquisitions of the computers and the software.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Please.

Mr. Peter Kormos: He's been out of circulation for a while, Ms. Wynne. I didn't know that he had established a new rapport with Mr. McGuinty's government. But that's the extent of it.

I understand that the College of Physicians and Surgeons has shown interest—and I've read their report—in this whole problem. But it seems to me—because people aren't making OxyContin like they make methamphetamines in meth labs. They aren't growing Percocets like you grow marijuana—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Yet.

Mr. Peter Kormos: "Yet," Ms. Jones says. Well, who knows.

I'm not aware of any source other than—perhaps there's the occasional, I suppose, hijacking of a truck in the States or a breach of security at a pharmaceutical manufacturer, but it seems to me that the OxyContin, the hillbilly heroin, and the Percocets are 100%, if not 100% shy 0.0001%, drugs that are being legitimately prescribed and dispensed by pharmacists.

There's no power in this legislation, for instance, to reveal interesting data to the College of Physicians and Surgeons. There's no power, of course, inherently in the government to discipline doctors. I know a lot of doctors, and I'm very grateful to have a good family doctor, a general practitioner, Evan Kouros, whom I love dearly and I trust absolutely. He's just a tremendous small-town doctor who does all the things that small-town doctors always used to do, and he still does them. He works in-

credible hours and makes relatively little money in comparison to what he could make if he were more aggressive about not doing the kind of high-needs patients that he takes on and so on—like other doctors in Welland. I know these women and men. I know them to be conscientious and diligent and primarily concerned about the welfare of their patients. And I know them, personally, as a fact, to be very reluctant to prescribe unnecessary drugs.

We're in this whole environment now—you talk to doctors, and one of the things that I just wish governments wouldn't allow is people, and you heard this in some of the submissions, who go to the doctor now and identify which drugs they want. They identify it by the brand name because of the advertising you see on television and the advertising you see in glossy magazines. They literally say, "The next time you see your doctor, ask for A, B or C." I don't know what the proper names are, but I call them mother's-little-helper type of drugs—a Rolling Stones reference; you knew that.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: And perhaps politically inappropriate now. I apologize for Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, but they should be apologizing for themselves, really. As a matter of fact, a discussion of narcotics wouldn't be complete without reference to them. But they're the feel-good drugs. They're the drugs that I'd say are not hard-core treatment drugs.

I talk to doctors, and doctors are very frustrated at people going to their offices and insisting that they get A, B, C or D. Most doctors I know, down where I come from, don't like prescribing drugs at all. They look for any number of alternatives before they—just like they don't like doing surgery. They look for any number of options.

When we heard the data that 20% of doctors prescribe the largest amount of these types of drugs—was that the number we heard?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Something like that.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Wow. Either you've got a small group of doctors who handle all the high-needs cases—right?—like all the high-pain cases, or—I know there are doctors who, in an industrial community, where you've got foundries and that type of labour—down where I come from, doctors handle a lot workers' compensation cases, for instance. So I suspect you're going to see more painkillers prescribed, quite frankly, in cities like Welland or Thorold or Port Colborne than you might in some more white-collar community. I don't want to denigrate any particular community.

That certainly, in and of itself, shouldn't be the indictment of a doctor, but it seems to me that there's a serious problem within the medical community, by a very, very small group of those practitioners, around the prescription of these kinds of drugs.

The sad thing, though, is that this legislation will do absolutely nothing, unless I've read it wrong—if I've read it wrong, please say so; show me the section—to permit the disclosure of information acquired by the min-

istry to, for instance, the College of Physicians and Surgeons. As a matter of fact, the legislation—and the parliamentary assistant knows this full well because she's read it as thoroughly as anybody has. When you take a look at subsection 5(5), that specifically indicates to whom the minister may disclose information. So the minister may acquire information from doctors and pharmacists—I'm rounding that out—but it may disclose information to whom? To doctors and pharmacists.

I understand there's some value in that. For instance, it will help pharmacists and doctors identify people who are double-doctoring. But then it's up to the doctor to say, "No, I've become aware"—and I don't know whether they can say that; I don't know what level of confidence they have to keep this information with. That's the problem, right? Does the doctor have to keep private the information that he or she may have acquired that a particular patient is double-doctoring? Is the doctor entitled to check that with the patient? What is the doctor supposed to do with that information?

I suppose if a doctor had a patient that he or she was working with for, heck, a lifetime, that doctor would want to say, "I've got this disturbing information. I want to confirm whether or not it's true." Wouldn't you expect your doctor to do that? I would. If I was going to be cut off a painkiller, I'd want a chance to say, "Whoa, something's wrong here." Don't tell me it's a fail-safe system—no such thing.

In far more simpler projects people's identities get merged and overlapped—and identity theft and so on. Don't tell me there aren't going to be mistakes. The ministry can't give the information to the College of Physicians and Surgeons; the ministry may disclose it to the doctor. What's the doctor to do? What's the doctor's ethical responsibility then? Is it to tip off or warn the patient? Or is it simply to say, "I'm sorry. I have to not prescribe this drug and I can't tell you why"? Or is it to say, "No, as a result of data received, you've been double-doctoring, triple-doctoring"?

What's the pharmacist to do with it? I don't know what pharmacists say, but it seems to me a pharmacist relies on the scrip that he or she gets and the legitimacy of it. I know all about forged scrips. I was a criminal lawyer. I defended addicts who would steal a pad of prescriptions from the doctor's office and they'd forge them. The pharmacists I know—in small-town Ontario, life is much kinder, like it is for Ms. Elliott where she lives, because the pharmacist knows you; everybody knows everybody where Mr. Bailey lives or where Ms. Gélina lives. The pharmacist knows you and the pharmacist talks to you.

This is the government that was really putting the boots to the little community-based pharmacies. Those are the very pharmacists who play a more active role. Big-box pharmacies change pharmacists every six months because they're used as entry-level pharmacy work by a lot of young pharmacists. They don't know—I'm sure they care, but they don't know they don't have the capacity.

So what's the pharmacist to do? Is the pharmacist to refuse a scrip? Because pharmacists are diligent, the ones I know, about ensuring—if they don't know the person and they're not sure, they'll call the doctor, right? You know that. You've experienced that, or most of us have, or we've seen it. That's fine by me. As I say, it works better with small, community-based, owner-operated pharmacies than it does with the big boxes. But I use a big-box pharmacy on Yonge Street here. It's owner-operated, quite frankly. It's Shoppers Drug Mart, just south of Wood Street, on the east side of Yonge Street; open 24 hours. That pharmacist is a great guy, a brilliant guy. He made a huge new investment with this big-box-pharmacy approach, but it's privately owned and operated. He takes a personal interest, and he's going to be there for the rest of the store.

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So what's the pharmacist to do if it's a legitimate scrip? Refuse to fill it? What are the pharmacist's ethical obligations? What does his profession say to him? Because there's no power here for the minister to disclose to the regulatory body of pharmacists that one of their members is interestingly involved in prescribing huge, huge numbers of Percocets or what have you, and maybe an investigation is warranted or at least a request for an explanation.

That's my problem with the bill: the longer the preamble, the less substance. Here's another bill with a full page of preamble that says all the right things and identifies a legitimate issue, a legitimate concern. But what about the pharmaceutical industry, those for-profit drug peddlers with their glossy ads and their television ads promoting drug use and identifying their particular drug—not generic, mind you, but their particular brand name drug that they're getting the big royalties and the huge profits on—as the solution to your problem and your problem and your problem? It seems to me that the pharmaceutical industry is part of this problem, too, isn't it? Yet again, there's no role there.

Is there any role of tracking these very dangerous drugs, these addictive drugs, from their source of manufacturing to how they get implemented? I know a little bit because I've talked to salespeople in the pharmacy industry. It's a pretty vicious industry. These are the same salespeople who provide doctors with samples to try to get that doctor wedded to a particular brand as compared to another, or to a particular treatment as compared to another. Heck, I read about doctors who identified themselves as some sort of community response people; they're key people for the pharmaceutical industry. They're shills for the pharmaceutical industry because they allow themselves to be used to peddle, market, justify and legitimize—granted—drugs that have passed all the Canadian health tests and the American FDA kinds of tests. But this doesn't effectively regulate the process that's causing the harm. It's a very, very narrow right of getting information and then power of feedback.

I don't have to be on the committee. Our member from Nickel Belt is going to be on the committee. She's

going to have to grapple with this, along with her colleagues. That's why there have to be committee hearings. What does this bill say or do for people in the Far North in those native communities? The member from Nickel Belt tells me that in some of those communities a doctor flies in with little more than a stethoscope, a blood pressure machine and a prescription pad. He doesn't have anything set up; he doesn't have an examination table or those other things, the cardiac stuff where they get the graph out on you and so on. What kind of tools does that doctor have? He's got a stethoscope, a blood pressure machine and a prescription pad because he's not coming back for how long? Who knows? A month, two months. There, it's prescription as a last resort but it's also prescription as the first resort because there are precious few opportunities.

What will this bill do to help those communities? Committee, travel to northern and native communities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate again and to respond to the comments from the member from Welland, some of which I found very constructive and some of which I found, perhaps, the old way of approaching things. But certainly—not that the member is old; I guess the word would be “experienced.”

I think that when you look at the strategy that's being developed to date—and some of the information that we heard from the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions showed that we have an issue that has really been emerging here in Ontario, not just in the past few months—this goes back to the 1990s. It's really an issue that we have ignored in a sense. We all heard about it, but as a government we weren't responding to it, and that, I think, goes back to governments of all three stripes.

What we heard from people as we travelled the province was that this is an issue of grave concern to members from rural communities, from the First Nations communities and from the urban communities as well.

I think the minister has acted wisely in choosing the people that she's consulted to get the strategy to this point, where she's presenting it to the House. She's talked to the parents, those who have lost kids to OxyContin overdoses. She's talked to law enforcement officials, to pharmacists, to doctors, talked to people who know this business inside and out, and I'm sure that each and every one of those people would suggest that the time is long overdue for action on this. Is it everything? Probably not. I haven't seen a bill in this House that is everything. Is it a terrific step forward? I think it is.

I thank the member from Welland for his comments. I thank him for expressing support for the bill when he began his comments, because if you don't think it's enough or if you think it's too much, what you can't argue with is its time has come. It's time to move on this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to commend the member from Welland for his exercise as he took this bill and went through it step by step, analyzed it and gave some background of issues from his riding and across the province—his long experience here in House.

Like I said, as I noticed in some of the preliminaries here in the bill, the deaths that were due to OxyContin rose over 240%, they say, from 35 in 2002 to 119 in 2006, so there's certainly a problem out there.

As I said earlier today, I know from interactions I've had with people in law enforcement—they've told me about the issues we have back in my riding, Sarnia-Lambton, small-town Ontario, so it's certainly an issue there. It's not just in the north or in Toronto or the larger urban centres; it's an issue all across Ontario.

I would urge that this bill go soon to committee and travel, as a number of speakers have said, so we can go out, hear what the people say and improve upon this bill. It's long overdue. It's something we need to do. It's a small step, but it's a step in the right direction. I think the sooner we can do that, the sooner we can talk to more pharmacists, more doctors, and also the people on the front-line services, whether it's the police departments and people who are involved in those or the group homes and homes where they have to deal with these kinds of issues on a day-to-day basis, and ask for their advice on how we can move this forward, improve this bill and bring it to fruition.

It's a small step in the right direction. At the end of the day, the PC caucus is going to support the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's always a pleasure to listen to what my colleague from Welland has to say. I would say we were all listening to the voice of experience. I'll show you how his experience shines through.

I tried to understand Bill 101 as best I could. I took the briefing that was offered from the ministry. I came to the bill convinced that once the bill was passed, not only could you collect the data, but the ministry would be in a position to manage it so that if irregularities came up, they would now have the power to contact a college directly about a member of a health profession who was not following the straight and narrow. They would be allowed to connect with the police force directly.

But as my colleague so eloquently pointed out, none of this is in the bill. The bill really only says that the ministry can go back to the prescribers, the dispensers and their health organization. That's it; that's all. All this part about going to your college, making sure that there are disciplinary actions that are followed if we realize that a prescriber was overusing their prescribing authority—same thing with a dispenser. If a dispenser was going beyond the laws regarding the control of narcotics, an automatic referral would be done to the police, to the college, and all of this would be coordinated so that we go at that issue and we act upon all of that data that had been collected with this new bill. But it's not in the bill.

I guess, thanks again to a voice of experience who was able to point that out.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: As ever, the member from Welland has given us an entertaining as well as an informative discussion of the bill from his legal perspective. No doubt his issues require careful consideration.

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It's certainly something that is already being done to a certain extent with prescribers, with physicians, when it comes to OHIP billing practices, where there is clearly a database related to fee-for-service charges by physicians. The analysis is done by OHIP officials to look for outliers. This is essentially what they do. It's an audit. They look for those who are prescribing or, actually, in the case of OHIP, making diagnostic codes on their fee-for-service submissions that are in excess of the usual. This type of audit is done, as I say. It results in a conversation immediately with the physician as to why there might be some outlying data being discovered through their billing practices. Obviously, for the vast majority of physicians, this is of considerable interest to them. Comparing themselves with the average and so on is useful information.

I strongly believe the vast majority of physicians prescribing narcotics are doing so legitimately for issues of chronic pain and they fully understand the addictive nature of their prescriptions. Unfortunately, no one is perfect, and sometimes these drugs do end up in the hands of criminals. Anything we can do to lessen that is a good step forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Welland has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I appreciate the comments of the various members.

By and large, you're not going to have drug traffickers with 500 tablets or capsules of Percocet or OxyContin. There's a very strange, as I understand the phenomenon—this is beer hall marketing. It's people who have prescriptions, who get the drugs legitimately, who sell them, or people who are addicted, obviously, who then double-doctor and forge prescriptions. I don't want to be simplistic, but that's about the extent of it. You're not bringing in cocaine from Colombia or pot from British Columbia and you're not dealing in huge volumes, and I suspect that this doesn't involve, for instance, organized crime or biker gangs to the same extent that other drug trafficking does. This is either addicts seeking prescriptions in an inappropriate way, double-doctoring or lying to doctors—doctors are pretty astute about that sort of stuff—or it's people who have legitimate claims, maybe whose need for the drug isn't as bad as they would have the doctor believe, who then sell the drugs in the beer hall.

Ms. Gélinas says that up in Sudbury, people are paying 80 bucks a cap for OxyContin. That's just amazing. If people are getting the 80 bucks, it's part of the problem with this type of drug addiction: People are getting the 80 bucks by stealing, by prostituting, by being drug dealers

themselves in other types of drugs, by smashing car windows and stealing stereos. That's how people get the \$80. It's a tragedy that has to be addressed.

Heck, I didn't want to be—I wasn't hard on the government at all. I was praising the minister; I was praising her parliamentary assistant. I want to praise her staff, who were helpful to me as well in getting a better handle on the bill.

And don't forget: Rogers, no; satellite, yes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate. We travelled around the province of Ontario as a select committee—I was on it to chair that committee—and we heard a number of things. We heard people come forward telling stories that I don't think they would typically tell to an average committee. People came forward, they opened themselves up a little bit, and it very, very quickly became evident to all members on the committee that something that we suspected all along, and I think is almost common knowledge, did actually exist; that is, there is a very close link between mental health and addiction. Quite often people are self-medicating because they have a mental health issue, and quite often people develop mental health issues because they've been self-medicating. It can work both ways.

We also learned that there's quite a difference between a drug addict and a drug abuser. There's quite a difference between someone who abuses alcohol and drinks too much—it's unhealthy—but could stop drinking tomorrow if they wanted to; the other side of that coin, obviously, is somebody who becomes an alcoholic. Most people don't realize that alcoholism is a fatal disease. We think somehow it's a character flaw. Alcoholism, left untreated, kills you in about 25 years.

These are some of the things that we were hearing as we travelled around the province, but I think that where it hit us closest to home as a committee was when we got into the remote First Nations community of Sandy Lake, where we suspected—like in a lot of other areas around the province of Ontario—that there would be some form of problem with prescription painkillers.

I can only speak for myself, but I sensed the same feeling among other members of the committee. I don't think anybody was prepared for the magnitude of the problem. I don't think anybody was prepared, when the chief was speaking to us—Chief Fiddler—about just how many people in the community of Sandy Lake were affected and what they were doing to get those drugs, especially Percodan, Percocet and OxyContin. If you truly needed that drug for pain management, a drug that would sell in southern Ontario for \$4 a tablet was reaching as high as \$280 a tablet in a community that has huge unemployment and simply cannot afford those sorts of prices.

What the chief said also was that because the only access to the community of Sandy Lake is through the airport, they put a sniffer dog at the airport, and from time to time, they were able to stem the flow of drugs

into that community. But what did that do? It's simple supply-and-demand economics. As the supply went down, the demand remained constant because of the addiction and the prices went up. That's when you started to get people paying nearly \$300 a tablet, splitting it into four and perhaps getting four days' impact from that drug.

What we can't lose sight of is that there's a valuable use for these prescription drugs as well. I think that anybody who knows anybody, perhaps a family member, or who has ever been through a painful experience themselves, will understand that there's a huge role for pain management. Sometimes that involves the use of drugs; sometimes it involves other methods.

We also seem to think that it's somebody else who is suffering the addiction, that nobody within this chamber, perhaps, could ever become addicted. I want to tell you a little story about what happened to me when I was in my 20s. The dentist decided that I needed my wisdom teeth out, and he discovered that I didn't have four wisdom teeth; I had five. He had to go down really deep into one side of my mouth. As I was leaving the hospital, the doctor said, "Take these pills. They'll help with the pain." Everyone had warned me that this would be the worst week of my life, getting five wisdom teeth out, going home—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Five?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Yes, I had five wisdom teeth.

Anyway, I went home. Everybody told me that this was going to be the worst week of my life; that I was going to experience pain like I had never had before. I started taking these pills that I was unfamiliar with. As it turned out, they were called Percodan. I had the best week of my life. I sat on the couch and stared out the window. My wife would go to work in morning and I'd be sitting on the couch. She'd come home in the afternoon and I would still be sitting on the couch, maybe with a little bit of blood running down my mouth, but I was the happiest person in the world. I was wondering when the pain was going to hit.

Well, the pain hit when the drugs ran out. That was on the Friday, and the pain hit in way that I hadn't experienced, and I knew that what people were talking about before, about it perhaps being the worst week of my life, was actually coming to be true.

I'll tell you what I did. I talked to my wife. I said, "I want you to go to the hospital and I want you to get some more of those drugs. Don't let them give you anything else. Don't take anything but those drugs." We didn't know anything about the addictive nature of these drugs. She went down to the hospital, told the hospital what I was going through, and they said, "You know what? Perhaps we ought to see Mr. Flynn."

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So I went down to the hospital, and the doctor looked me square in the eye and said, "These are a very addictive drug. You probably have become addicted to this drug in a week." It was the last Percodan I ever had in

my life. I'm about as normal and average a person as you could possibly find, and I became addicted to prescription painkillers within a week.

I told this story to a group of grade fives—we all go and visit the grade fives. The point I was trying to make is that people with mental health issues and prescription drug addictions aren't the people we think of as the homeless people down on University Avenue. I told them about my own experience, and I got a really nice letter from a little boy in grade five who said, "Thank you, Mr. Flynn, for visiting our class, and thank you very much for telling us that you were a drug addict," which I thought got right the point in a way that only a fifth grader could. But I think he got the point: This could happen to any one of us in this room.

This happens to pro athletes. This happens to people who are trying to recover from a variety of physical ailments. We're talking about the illegal use of prescription drugs. But I think we need to talk about the legal use of prescription drugs as well, and perhaps whether they are being overused in a pain management prescription. I'm saying that there are a variety of avenues by which drugs can reach people in a way they aren't intended to reach them.

I have unfortunately had a number of deaths of young people who have overdosed on OxyContin in my community of Oakville. Two young men who were friends, shortly after each other, did just about exactly the same thing. There was a letter to the editor in the Star or the Globe the other day from one of the mothers. So it hits very close to home.

I think it's time that we start to at least get a handle on this issue; to at least understand the magnitude of the issue. Once you can measure something, you can manage something, and I think this is a first step toward the management of what has become an issue that is impacting people across all income levels, and that impacts even more severely on those of low income because the addiction drives them to spend money they simply don't have, or money that really was earmarked for rent or for food. It goes instead to feed an addiction they just don't have the assistance to beat or perhaps, sometimes, even the motivation to beat.

I think the idea of a database gives us a much better handle on just what is happening in Ontario today. Apparently it has become a much larger problem in the Maritimes as well. If we moved around the world, in some of the more affluent societies that have access to the more advanced pharmaceuticals, I think you're going to find that it's an issue as well. It just hasn't been dealt with to date in an appropriate manner.

At the same time, as I said earlier, we need to understand that advances that have been made in the development of drugs such as OxyContin have probably made life worth living again for some people who were living with pain that was just about insufferable. It has probably put them in a position where they're able to get through the day without the sort of pain they have experienced in the past.

Until you walk in somebody else's shoes, it's sometimes a little difficult to make proper recommendations. That was the beauty, I think, of travelling around the province on the all-party Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. It allowed all of us to park our membership cards at the door and hear first-hand from people who were brave enough to come forward, go beyond the stigma that's often attached to addictions and mental health issues, and tell stories about what has happened to them, to a family member or to a friend; what they've been able to do about it; and what supports are in place and what supports aren't in place. I think we were all hearing the same thing at the same time, as we were moving around the province.

We heard about a mother, for example, whose child was so addicted to drugs and didn't have the opportunity to get timely treatment, who was motivated to go and get that treatment to get off the drug, but simply was put on a waiting list. The mother told us that she slept by the door. The only way out of the house was through the front door, and the child would have to go over the mother to get out of the house. The mother was simply staying put: She wasn't letting the child out of the house. But nobody should have to live like that.

People who come forward and are brave enough to tell stories like that, about what they're dealing with behind closed doors, I think deserve the respect and the admiration of all members of this House, because previously, we've been afraid to talk about issues such as this. Previously, we've hidden this issue away, mental health and addictions. We've treated it not as an illness, not as a sickness; we've treated it as some sort of character flaw or we've treated it as some sort of a genetic flaw. Instead of treating it as an illness, instead of treating it as a sickness and giving it the attention it deserved, it's almost like all of us have swept it under the rug.

I think it was terrific, the attitude that the members of the select committee brought to bear during the process, and that was, we were prepared to listen, we were prepared to listen to each other as well, and we were prepared to come forward with a report that was consensus-driven.

One of the recommendations, if you read through the 23 of them—all of the recommendations, I think, are very good recommendations and they were presented in a reasonable way, saying, "This needs to be done." "You should take a look at this." "You might want to consider an umbrella organization." There was one recommendation that said, "You should act immediately," and those words were put in there—I'm sure the members will agree—for good reason. That is, we realized that the use of prescription drugs was growing to a point that if it wasn't contained, it was going to blossom out of control. If we were ever going to bring it back under control, the government had to act immediately; the government had to act now. So when the minister informed everybody that she was bringing forward a narcotics strategy that was right in line with the recommendations from the select committee, it really went a long way to validating

the work of the committee. It went a long way to validating the opinions that we'd heard from the people of Ontario, who were coming forward to us, saying, "We shouldn't have to live like this"—Chief Fiddler, for example, trying to use some of the traditional means of trying to get people off OxyContin, trying to get them off prescription painkillers—and trying to use any means possible because they didn't have the right facilities, they didn't have the right assistance and they didn't have the support that was necessary to do the type of job that that community needs. The devastation that it was wreaking on that community was something that the community simply would not, over the long term, be able to sustain. You can't have unemployment at that level combined with drug addiction at that level, drug addiction at those costs, and expect that somehow, Sandy Lake is going to emerge as a healthy community. It just defies logic.

This is the first step in what I hope is going to be a number of steps that are going to systemically address each and every one of the recommendations that we put forward as a select committee. The link to mental health, I think, is very, very clear. It's one that is indisputable now and it's one where I think the people of Ontario have simply said, "Enough is enough. I'm going to talk about it." Some of the people we had come forward to present the report with us were people who were household heroes. One of them was called Canada's sweetheart: Elizabeth Manley, the skater. That's not typically someone you think of when you think of mental health or addiction. Catherine Pringle, a young lady—a very, very talented, skilful young lady who worked at Queen's Park for some time—came forward with her story: how it impacted on her family, how she worked, through her mom and her dad, to bring the issue under control to the point that she's able to live a wonderful sort of life that she is living right now.

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I think when people bring forward stories like that and they allow us a peek into their personal lives, we owe it to them to do our best to bring forward legislation that is going to do something about what they are bringing forward, which has just been kept under wraps for far too long.

There are five key elements to the narcotics strategy that is being brought forward. I think they are being brought forward in a systematic way and I think there's some logic attached to it.

As I said, we need to get a handle on who is prescribing these drugs. I'm sure there are drugs coming in from other provinces. I'm sure there are drugs coming in from other countries. I'm sure there are drugs that are being made illegally—OxyContin. But we know that some large number of them are coming out of the institutionalized medical system that we have right here in Ontario. The beauty of that is that it's a system that we fund and regulate. It's a system that we have control over as a Legislature. It's something we can do something about. That's why I was very pleased to see this come forward.

After the monitoring, the intent is to partner with the health care sector and to educate on appropriate prescribing, and partner with the health care system to educate on appropriate dispensing. That's fully recognizing that there is a role for these products, a role for these drugs, that for some people, the best thing that could ever have happened to them is that OxyContin became available to control the pain they're experiencing. But for those with an addictive nature, for those who are dealing with mental health issues, for those who are simply drug abusers, for those who just simply want to get high, there is a misuse that can be applied to these drugs, and it's happening.

I think we need an education system within the province of Ontario that alerts ordinary people to the dangers of these drugs. People think—and I'm sure it's wrong—that because a drug is on a prescription, then it must be a safe drug; if a doctor is prescribing it, there must be some safety attached to that. I think if it's being prescribed and it's being used as it is prescribed and it's being used by the right person at the right time in the right quantities, there is some logic to that. If people are going in and faking injuries or pain simply to get their hands on OxyContin so that they can, as the speaker from Welland said, perhaps take it to the beer hall, perhaps take it wherever they can dispense the drug themselves and make a little bit of money out of it, then that obviously is not what our medical system was intended to do.

There is a way of addressing that. I think the first step is to support the legislation that we have before us, because it does a number of things. The coincidence of timing really highlights the fact that this is an important issue that people are talking about. We heard it as we travelled around the province of Ontario. We spent time in southern Ontario, in northern Ontario. We went to Moosonee, we went to Sandy Lake, we went to Sioux Lookout, hearing the same thing over and over and over again. What surprised me was hearing how much of a problem it was in the rural communities. That was a bit of a shocker for me. As I said, in my own community it has taken a number of young lives that simply didn't have to be lost.

So I would urge all members to support this. I'm hoping it goes out for public comment as well, because certainly, if the public comment is anything like the select committee heard on its rounds, it is something that is going to be of some value to all members of this House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm really pleased to hear the member from Oakville say that Bill 101, which allows for the creation of the prescription drug electronic database, is but one of many steps that need to be taken in order to deal with this problem. I have no doubt that he, who was the able Chair of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, and other government members who were also members of the committee will continue to advocate that position, as we in the official opposition will do. I'm sure the member from the third

party, Ms. Gélinas, the member from Nickel Belt, will also continue to advocate for that.

We learned a lot in the select committee as we travelled around the province. One of the things that I think really opened my eyes and I started to understand much more fully was the interconnection between mental health and addictions and how it's sort of a chicken-and-egg situation: Which one came first? But there's no question that there are many people across the province of Ontario who have problems with depression, anxiety and other types of mental illness who are masking their symptoms with prescription drugs and other things like alcohol and non-prescription drugs. There's a huge problem there that needs to be addressed that I don't think I was fully aware of until I started travelling with the committee.

The other issue for I think all of us who experienced the trip to some of the First Nations communities, the Moosonee and Sandy Lake experience, was the depth of the problems associated with these addictions and the tragedies that have resulted from it. I remember meeting a grandmother who was raising her grandson, who would have been about 10 years old, because both of his parents were so seriously addicted to prescription drugs. We really need to visit these communities to learn about some of the hope that's there, too, some of the solutions that may come up that, under Chief Fiddler at Sandy Lake First Nation and other First Nations communities, we should be listening to and following as time goes on.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I am happy to comment on the speech that the member from Oakville just gave. I'm especially happy that he mentioned that he sees the value of having this bill travel and to make sure that the people from the north, the people in rural Ontario, in isolated communities, have a chance to comment.

We have shared a lot of experiences that we heard when we travelled with the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, but the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions does not mention creating a database. Bill 101 was not on our radar when we went out to those communities at all. Now it is there. It is written and translated for everybody to read, view and comment on. So I'm glad that he sees the value in going all over Ontario. I am advocating for the north—that's where I'm from—but certainly we have to do the big city also. I'm sure they have their own set of challenges with this bill. Given the prescription pattern, given the primary care models that exist to meet the needs of northern Ontario that are not available to people in southern Ontario because of the challenge of recruitment and retention that we have in rural, northern and isolated communities, they have developed their own way of prescribing, dispensing and monitoring. They need to have a say to make sure that when this bill rolls out, everybody benefits from it—every prescriber, every dispenser and every patient who will ever be prescribed one of those drugs or have to take

one of those drugs or, God forbid, get addicted to those drugs.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: First of all, I'd like to congratulate the member from Oakville on a very moving and very professional presentation on this particular bill. Coming, as he does, from a community like Oakville, with its row upon row of neat, well-manicured homes, one can often forget that inside those homes live people who are as fallible and fraught with problems as they are anywhere else in the province. The member for Oakville is well known in his community for his empathy and compassion with both the least and most exalted of our community, and I think that was on display here in his very moving address.

The points I'd like to make are that no one who legitimately needs prescription painkillers needs to worry about this particular initiative. Your access to it will not be blocked. Coming as I do, as well, from a relatively well-to-do community, we have our families—and almost everybody knows them—in which someone is coping with bipolar disorder or depression. If you're close to the person or to the family, one of the first things that I think surprises you is the sheer range and scope of the medication regime that people find themselves on. It comes at a moment in people's lives when they need to be able to look out to those close to them and find some support and assistance to see themselves through a difficult period, or on to a prescription drug regime that may last them the rest of their lives. What this bill seeks to do is ensure that those people who legitimately need prescription painkillers and other similar narcotics can continue to get them, and takes reasonable measures to protect the taxpayers and the rest of the province to ensure that the privilege isn't abused.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

There being no more questions and comments, the member from Oakville has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to all the speakers who followed my comments. It is appreciated.

This issue has had a constructive tone through it, right from day one. It's good to see that tone continuing in the House—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Hey, hey.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Well, outside of the member from Welland, perhaps, but I think he's just having some fun with us. He's a bit of a contrarian, and that's part of his nature.

But when you look at the stats, we've got to treat this seriously, because the evidence is overwhelming. Look at between 1991 and 2009: When anything bad increases by 900%, you know that's a serious issue. You know that's something you have to deal with, and that, quite simply, is a fact for narcotics prescriptions. For some reason, prescriptions have increased by more than 900% in about 18 years. Since 2004, which is only six years ago, the

number of people who have died as a result of OxyContin- or oxycodone-related deaths in Ontario has doubled. Left unchecked, does that double again in nine years? It probably doubles again in five years if left unchecked, as these drugs become more and more popular.

When you look at people who were being admitted to our institutions between 2004 and 2008, they have doubled as well in just four years. Clearly, this is an issue that this government and this House, the opposition party and the third party need to come together and get a grip on. I think the people of Ontario like the way that the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions approached things. I'd like to see us continue to move forward in that vein and work together to make sure that this issue is resolved for good.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. This afternoon's debate has been very interesting. Of course, on Monday afternoons we sit between 1 and 6 p.m., and you've done a great job of chairing the session this afternoon.

I think it's been very, very interesting, the subject of second reading debate of Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances, and the short title of this bill is the Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act. Over the course of the debate this afternoon, we've had some very informed presentations by members of the Legislature, many of whom served on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions and for 18 months spent a great deal of time studying these very issues and involving themselves in terms of public discussion on the issue, with a view towards working together in a non-partisan, constructive way to bring forward some recommended solutions, believing that the government would listen. I want to give credit to my colleague the member for Whitby—Oshawa, who, of course, initiated this through a private member's resolution and who started this discussion. Here we are, a year and a half later—still talking about it, granted, but the wheels move slowly around here, as we know. We hope that we are indeed making progress.

My colleague the member for Dufferin—Caledon participated in those many months of hearings, and I think it's important to give credit and recognition to the other MPPs who served on that committee. In the tradition of the Legislature, I'm going to refer to them by their riding names: the Chair, who is the member for Oakville; the Vice-Chair, the member for Whitby—Oshawa; the member for Scarborough—Rouge River; the member for Oak Ridges—Markham; the member for Peterborough; the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex; the member for Nickel Belt; as I said before, the member for Dufferin—Caledon; and the member for Guelph—all of whom, as I said, spent a considerable amount of their time over the last year and a half working to try to seek solutions to issues like this one.

As we have heard, this bill seems to be in response to at least one of the recommendations of this report, recommendation 11: "The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should immediately address the problem of addiction to prescription painkillers." Although there was no specific reference to the establishment of a registry like this, at least there was an identification in the report of a problem and a need, and the government would appear to be endeavouring to respond to that particular issue.

Of course, it has been said on our side of the House that we are prepared to support this bill in principle at second reading. It's our intention to support it and to send it off to a committee. And there is a possibility that a standing committee of the Legislature could deal with this bill, with further public hearings, perhaps, in the break after the Thanksgiving weekend—as we know, the House doesn't sit that week—or perhaps the week that we don't sit for Remembrance Day. That would allow for further discussion of the issue and hopefully amendments that will further improve the bill and ensure that it is, in fact, accomplishing the objectives that the government would set out.

From our perspective as a caucus, we have some points that we need to make during the course of this debate. Certainly we acknowledge and agree that prescription drug abuse in Ontario is urgent and growing rapidly, and there is no question that it needs to be addressed, that it must be addressed, and that it needs to be addressed immediately in a meaningful way that's effective toward solving the problem that is affecting so many of our families.

We have also pointed out from this side of the House, over the course of this debate—and we will continue to do so and remind the government, because it's our job in the opposition to hold them accountable. We remind them of the \$1-billion eHealth scandal that was identified by the Auditor General as a waste of hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money. Think of how that money might have been spent in a more effective way to improve our health care system, to respond to issues like this. I raised a rhetorical question a few minutes ago about whether or not we would even be discussing Bill 101 if the eHealth money had been spent in a way that was effective. We would have not even, perhaps, needed to talk about Bill 101 if eHealth had been successful.

We also point out that the legislation falls short of truly addressing many addiction problems in the province of Ontario. The Minister of Health wants to boast about strengthening the important roles of addiction treatment and education, but the legislation, of course, only addresses one aspect: the creation of a narcotic-tracking database, which will not address many of the core issues that have created the problem.

We also agree with the underlying principles of bill, but would, again, ask for full committee hearings, including hearings in northern Ontario and in our aboriginal communities, in order to make sure that we fully understand the full parameters of this bill and that all stake-

holders are given the opportunity to fully comment on this as we go forward.

I think that's certainly the position of our party, and it's well understood. As the debate unfolds, I think you're going to see a consistent message from our side of the House in that respect.

I also want to put on the record a few items with respect to the context of this bill, the context upon which we begin this debate. We know and we're informed, and the government has pointed out, that Ontario has the highest rate of narcotics use in Canada, and that narcotics-abuse-related admissions to publicly funded treatment and addiction services in Ontario doubled between 2004 and 2008, in just a short four-year period. Obviously, there's a real issue there and a real problem.

We're informed that the ministry spent \$156 million on narcotics for Ontario drug benefit program recipients in the fiscal year 2009-10, for 3.9 million prescriptions, and that this equates to an average of over six prescriptions per person, at an annual cost of \$260 per person.

We're told that a number of First Nations communities have declared a state of emergency over the abuse of prescription narcotics, particularly oxycodone-containing drugs.

We also know that Ontario's narcotics strategy has been developed with the advice of the Narcotics Advisory Panel. This was established in March 2009, and the 12-member group includes family physicians, pain and addiction specialists, pharmacists, the coroner's office, professional regulatory bodies and law enforcement officials. So I think that's important to put on the table.

I know that during the course of the debate on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions report—unfortunately, the government House leader only allocated approximately one hour for the debate on the report. That took place on a Tuesday morning—

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Arnott: —just over a week ago now. It's really insufficient in terms of the effort that went into this committee report, the 18 months of work by the select committee. To allow only one hour on the debate on the contents of the report I thought was extremely disappointing, and I'm sure it must have been extremely disappointing to the chairman of the committee and the government members. I would encourage them again to continue to speak up within the government caucus to advocate for the proposals that they worked so hard to achieve.

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Let's go through them quickly. There was committee recommendation number 1, that there needed to be "a new umbrella organization—Mental Health and Addictions Ontario ... —responsible to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care...." It was recommended that this new body would "be created to ensure that a single body is responsible for designing, managing, and coordinating the mental health and addictions system, and that programs and services are delivered consistently and comprehensively across Ontario" and that "all mental health

and addictions programs and services—for all regions of the province and for all ages, including children and youth—should be consolidated in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.”

I gather that this was an effort to reduce fragmentation within the delivery of these services and to ensure that there would be accountability and coordination, and that was the number one recommendation, the very first one. We have yet to hear a response from the government on that particular recommendation.

Number 2: “Mental Health and Addictions Ontario should ensure that a basket of core institutional, residential and community services is available in every region of the province for clients of all ages, identify gaps, and eliminate duplication. Referral patterns” need to “be put in place for the provision of those specialized services only available outside of a region. Each region must ... have sufficient capacity to care for clients with concurrent disorders.”

Of course, this would appear to address the issue of ensuring that there is uniformity of service delivery across the province, so that there’s no region of the province that has better service than another. Certainly, as Ontario legislators, all of us should, I think, embrace the concept that everyone across Ontario should have the opportunity to receive the same level of health service, irrespective of what region of the province they may live in. And again, we have yet to hear a response from the government on that recommendation, to the best of my knowledge.

Recommendation number 3: “Clients and their families should have access to system navigators who will connect them with the appropriate treatment and community support services (e.g., housing, income support, employment, peer support, and recreational opportunities). Those with continuing, complex needs should be supported by a plan that will lead them through their journey to recovery and wellness, particularly on discharge from institutional or residential treatment.”

This would appear to be a recommendation to ensure that every single patient or client has someone who can help them through the system. I have heard in my riding of situations where, if people couldn’t advocate for themselves and there was no family member who could advocate for them, there was just nobody there and they fell through the cracks. This would appear to be an effort to resolve that problem. Again, we have yet to hear a response from the government as to how they will implement that recommendation.

Recommendation number 4: “Mental Health and Addictions Ontario should conduct an assessment of the need for acute care psychiatric beds for both children and adults by region.”

This is an effort to gather more information, to determine, I suppose, where there may be gaps in terms of service, where there is greater need in terms of acute care psychiatric beds, and I know there are vast regions of the province which would probably be identified as underserved in this respect. We have yet to hear a response

from the government as to how they’re going to implement recommendation number 4.

Recommendation number 5 of this select committee report: “Mental Health and Addictions Ontario should ensure that primary care providers and relevant staff in all levels of the education and long-term-care systems have access to common, age-appropriate, evidence-based assessment and screening tools.”

This would appear to be an effort to ensure that everyone in the system at the staff level has access to the kinds of assessment and screening tools that they will need to make proper professional judgment.

Again, recommendation number 5: We have yet to hear a response from the government which is a commitment to implement that specific recommendation.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Have they done anything?

Mr. Ted Arnett: They would tell you that they’ve addressed recommendation number 11, so that’s, I guess, a start, and that’s why we’re going to support it.

Recommendation number 6—here we go again: “Mental Health and Addictions Ontario”—this new agency that’s recommended—“should facilitate the creation of more 24/7 mobile crisis intervention teams.

“The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should expand and do more to publicize Telehealth Ontario’s ability to respond to callers with mental health and addictions issues.” Of course, we’re highlighting the existing service that our party actually put in place: Telehealth Ontario. We’re wanting to draw attention to that and we’re wanting to make sure that it’s effective and that there is more service available, I suppose, in the evenings and overnight, perhaps during the holiday season, perhaps when, in a great many cases, people have mental health issues. People who have mental health issues have, in many cases, a great deal of difficulty during some of those special times of the year. And once again, the government has yet to make, to the best of my knowledge, a commitment to implement those two recommendations or to tell us how they will implement them.

Recommendation number 8: “Mental Health and Addictions Ontario should work with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to review emergency department protocols in order to increase their capacity to deal effectively, efficiently and sensitively with people appearing with mental health and addictions issues, and when appropriate, redirect or connect them to community-based services and supports.”

Here we have a recommendation that the new agency should work co-operatively and constructively with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to look at the emergency department protocols in the hospitals to ensure that they are operating properly and making a difference. Here we are; recommendation number 8. Let’s hear from the government how they’re going to implement recommendation number 8. So far we have yet to hear from the government in that respect.

Recommendation number 9: “Primary care providers should be given the proper tools and support to enable them to develop a greater sensitivity for the mental health

and addictions needs of their patients. This can take such forms as part of formal academic programs or continuing education."

Here we are again: a recommendation to encourage and ensure that our primary care providers have the expertise that they're going to need to ensure that they can meet the mental health needs of their patients.

Point number 10: "All interdisciplinary primary care models should include a mental health and addictions treatment component (e.g., social worker, psychiatrist, psychologist or mental health worker)."

Again, a sensible recommendation that came out of this committee process. This non-partisan select committee, having listened and studied the issue for some time, came up with this suggestion. Where is the response of the government? Where is the commitment of the government to implement those two recommendations?

Then, of course, number 12: "The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should examine further changes to the family physician remuneration model to focus on improving access to and the quality of primary care for people with mental illnesses and addictions." Here we go again. Recommendation number 12, and no response from the government as of yet.

Recommendation number 13: "Mental Health and Addictions Ontario should ensure, coordinate and advocate for the creation of ... affordable and safe housing units, with appropriate levels of support to meet the long-term and transitional needs of people with serious mental illnesses and addictions."

This is a huge issue, I know, in terms of resolving this issue, because if there is inadequate housing for people with these sorts of needs, it makes it very, very difficult for them to overcome the problems, notwithstanding the best health care that they might be receiving. Housing is a huge issue. Where is the response of the government on recommendation number 13 from the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions?

Recommendation number 14: "Mental Health and Addictions Ontario should ensure that institutional and community-based service providers actively seek to involve peer support workers in all aspects of service delivery and take advantage of the Ontario Peer Development Initiative's Peer Support Toolkit Project that will enable peer support organizations to accredit peer workers." Where is the response of the government to recommendation number 14?

Recommendation number 15: "Mental Health and Addictions Ontario should work with employers and community-based service providers on strategies to increase employment opportunities and supports for people with mental illnesses and addictions."

Of course, this is a very sensible recommendation as well, to involve business, which has an interest and a stake in this problem too, and an interest in seeing it resolved. This is a welcome recommendation, and I'm sure that there would be a great number of business people who would want to get involved in that and support that, but certainly it requires government initiative and gov-

ernment leadership. Where is the commitment of the McGuinty Liberal government to implement recommendation number 15?

Recommendation 16: "Mental Health and Addictions Ontario should provide for the increased availability of respite care to allow family members the time and freedom to pursue personal, social and recreational endeavours in order to maintain their own mental health. It should also monitor the progress of the Mental Health Commission of Canada's Mental Health Family Link program's peer support project for family caregivers, and adopt best practices."

Certainly we know, as members of the Legislature, that respite care is a good investment in terms of supporting families who are in turn supporting a family member who has difficulties—in this case, perhaps addiction issues or mental health issues. Respite care, in many cases, means that less money has to be spent by the government in terms of helping the families, and if there is insufficient or inadequate respite care funding, often a crisis is just around the corner, which in many cases requires institutional care. That is far more expensive over the short run and the long run, and far less helpful to the patient or the client in most cases. So this is a recommendation that you would think the government would want to embrace and adopt, that the government would want to announce its support for. Where is the government support for recommendation 16?

Recommendation 17: "The services of court mental health workers should be made widely available across all regions of Ontario, in order to divert more individuals with a mental illness or addiction out of the justice system and into appropriate mental health and addictions services and supports."

Recommendation 18: "Additional mental health, drug treatment, and youth mental health courts should be created across all regions of Ontario, to provide more appropriate services for individuals with a mental illness or addiction."

Recommendation 19: "The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services should direct police forces across the province to provide training for officers who may encounter people suffering from mental illnesses and addictions."

Recommendation 20: "The core basket of mental health and addictions services should be available to the incarcerated population, and discharge plans for individuals with a mental illness or addiction should be expanded to include the services of a system navigator and appropriate community services."

Where is the government's endorsement of these recommendations?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Pursuant to standing order 8(a), I declare that this House now stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 28 September 2010

Mardi 28 septembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 28 September 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 28 septembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Islamic prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to direct your attention to O'Brien and Bosc, second edition, House of Commons Procedure and Practice. On page 530, under the heading "Substantive motions," it reads: "Substantive motions are independent proposals which are complete in themselves, and are neither incidental to nor dependent upon any proceeding already before the House. As self-contained items of business for consideration and decision, each is used to elicit an opinion or action of the House. They are amendable and must be phrased in such a way as to enable the House to express agreement or disagreement with what is proposed."

This is the basis of the idea that a motion cannot compel the House or the Legislature to do something that is not within its power.

I would now like to call your attention to the motion put forward by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The motion calls on the federal government to "fulfill their commitment under the recently expired five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement." This makes the motion confusing and incorrect in its essence.

In May 2010, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, along with his federal counterpart, extended this very agreement until March 2011. Therefore, the motion is calling upon us to consider a defunct agreement when the agreement is very much still alive, and asks the House to do something that therefore would not be within its power.

I also considered the possibility of amending the motion. However, again, this is changing the very basis of the motion: that the agreement is expired when it is not.

I call your attention to an announcement made by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration on May 5, 2010. I quote from the news release announcing the extension of the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement: "'Ontario is pleased to sign this one-year extension as we negotiate a successor agreement, so that newcomers to the province

can continue to receive the services they need to settle and succeed,' said Minister Hoskins." This is proof that the agreement is in existence and, therefore, the motion is out of order, as it would require the House to do something that is not within its power.

I quote standing order 14, which says, "Whenever the Speaker is of the opinion that a motion offered to the House is contrary to the rules and privileges of Parliament, the Speaker shall rule it out of order and may quote the rule or authority applicable." I have quoted for you the rule on substantive motions, and I have shown how this motion breaches that rule. I would therefore ask that you rule this motion out of order at this time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, obviously this motion is not out of order. What we are requesting through this motion, though it has not actually been read to the House, is that we are calling on the federal government to immediately commence negotiations. The five-year agreement that my friend has referred to has expired. We have a one-year extension, but obviously, in order to move forward and to support our immigrants and new Canadians, we need to have an agreement in place and we need to start the negotiations. What we are asking through this motion is that the House support our government in its attempted negotiations with the federal government and that we call on the federal government to support us in this and to initiate discussions and negotiations into a new agreement.

What the opposition today is moving is not relevant to this particular motion. This motion is in order. It represents what we hope will be the will of the Legislature to support us in our negotiations with the federal government and to support us in supporting our new Canadians. If the opposition does not feel that it wants to support this motion and support new Canadians in Ontario, that is their decision and they can make that decision in the debate on this motion. But this motion is actually in support of engaging the federal government, which is actually a live issue at this particular time, as the federal government is not coming to the table to engage in discussions. It is about engaging in discussions for an agreement that will expire, that is expiring, we all know, at the end of March 2011. If we don't start discussions now, we will have no agreement in 2011-12, which is vitally important to our new Canadians in Ontario.

This is a live issue. This is an important issue for Ontarians, for new Ontarians in particular, and for our

government. We hope that the opposition will support us in this motion.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: On a point of order, I'm just asking the Chair: Are we debating something that isn't yet on the floor? There's no motion before us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We're discussing a point of order. Member from Beaches–East York?

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, to weigh in on this just a little, the clear wording of what is on the order paper does state, about mid-paragraph, "asks the federal government to fulfill their commitment under the recently expired five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement." It states categorically that it is recently expired. I think that, should the government wish to put this forward, they should amend it prior to it being debated, because it's very clear from what is being put forward that they are stating it has expired whereas, in fact, it has been extended. So it is not technically correct, as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke correctly put.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: In fact, the five-year agreement has expired. There is in place a one-year interim agreement. What we are proposing and what we are asking for support from the opposition and from this House on is that we immediately commence negotiations of a new agreement. That is what we're proposing. We have only until March to get this new agreement in place.

This motion is completely in order.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to thank the honourable members. I will take a five-minute recess to consult with the table.

The House recessed from 0909 to 0916.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for raising the issue, and for the comments by the government House leader, the member from Essex and the member from Beaches–East York.

This certainly presents a question of semantics on which there is clear disagreement, but beyond that it is not for the Speaker to parse the meaning behind the words in a motion, nor for the Speaker to be the arbiter over a difference of opinion. During the arguments made on the point of order, it was clear that both sides of the House can successfully argue the semantics in the motion, but a debate over the precise meaning does not negate the procedural orderliness of the motion. The key to the orderliness of a motion is whether it presents an intelligible question to the House which the House can resolve. In my opinion, the motion as currently worded does so.

However, this is a substantive government motion and it is therefore capable of being amended. It is open to any member to propose an amendment to either delete elements of it or add to it in such a manner as to try and make it more acceptable to a wider number of members. The House therefore possesses the means to resolve the alleged factual irregularity, if it agrees such exists,

simply on whether or not it chooses to amend the motion or whether or not it chooses to pass the motion with or without amendment. I suggest that this would be the procedurally correct manner in dealing with what amounts to a disagreement over the precision of the language in the motion. I find the motion to be in order and will allow the debate to proceed.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that Ontario receives, welcomes and benefits from the contributions of nearly half of all new immigrants coming to Canada and calls on the federal government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by investing in services for newcomers and therefore asks the federal government to fulfill their commitment under the recently expired five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement to spend the outstanding \$207 million promised to Ontario's newcomers and immediately commence negotiations on a comprehensive new agreement that provides the adequate funding, planning, and governance necessary for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Hoskins has moved government notice of motion number 29. Debate?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm pleased to rise in the Legislature today as Ontario's Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to speak to this important matter.

For generations, immigrants have chosen Ontario as their new home because of the opportunities they have right here in this province to create a better life for themselves and for their families. Newcomers to Ontario want the same opportunities that we all aspire to: They want meaningful employment, a good education and a high quality of life.

The province of Ontario has always been a place where immigrants can strive to achieve their full potential. Ontario has been fortunate. Many of these immigrants have not only succeeded but have become household names, such as businessman and philanthropist Michael Lee-Chin, filmmaker Deepa Mehta, former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson and former cabinet minister, and currently our Fairness Commissioner, Jean Augustine. These remarkable individuals have inspired us and have left an indelible imprint with their valuable contributions. There are also millions of newcomers who may not be household names but through their hard work have made and continue to make our province vibrant, strong and prosperous. They have made Ontario one of the best places in the world in which to live.

As many of my honourable and esteemed colleagues know, Ontario has always been the destination of choice for new Canadians. Today, our province continues to receive the majority of newcomers who immigrate to Canada. Our province receives approximately 110,000

newcomers each and every year. That is more than the combined total of the next two provinces.

Why is Ontario attractive to so many people from around the world? Why is Ontario attractive to people from Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East and Europe? It's because Ontario is renowned for being open, vibrant, peaceful, compassionate and inclusive. That's important, because now more than ever our province needs to attract the best and the brightest.

As we said in the speech from the throne, immigration is Ontario's lifeblood. It's our demographic future. It is fuel for our economic engine. With an aging population and a declining birthrate, Ontario's future prosperity depends on immigration. Attracting skilled newcomers, helping them to get settled and retaining them here in this province is an economic imperative for Ontario. This is especially important because within the next decade, newcomers will make up 100% of Ontario's net labour growth. To ensure that Ontario remains prosperous, we need immigrants for the skills and talents that they bring and for the richness that they add to the fabric of our society. In short, we need a steady stream of highly skilled, highly educated immigrants.

Let me say that Ontarians understand the importance of immigration. I want to refer to a recent poll that was published by Nanos in June of this year, where it asked Ontarians their views on various immigration matters. One of the questions they asked was whether immigration was a key positive feature of Canada as a country. The response of Ontarians was that a full 82% agreed that immigration is a key positive feature of Canada as a country. Furthermore, they were asked if immigration is one of the key tools that Canada has and should use to strengthen the economy. The response of Ontarians was that a full 70% of them agreed with that statement, that immigration is one of the key tools that Canada can use to strengthen our economy.

All of us in this House must join with our constituents, with the people of Ontario, and commit to helping our newcomers succeed. We can do so today by supporting this resolution. Together, we must call on the federal government to support Ontario's newcomers and to invest in their success and in their hopes and dreams. We must call on the federal government to recognize that Canada's success depends on a strong and competitive Ontario. Ottawa can do this by coming to the table and negotiating a comprehensive new immigration agreement with the government of Ontario.

The first Canada-Ontario immigration agreement was signed in 2005 for a five-year term. It expired in March of this year, and at that time my federal counterpart and I signed a one-year extension to allow for the negotiation of a new agreement. Well before the first agreement expired and in the six months since, the McGuinty government has repeatedly called on the federal government to live up to their responsibility to Ontario's immigrants. We've repeatedly asked Ottawa to begin negotiations—simply to begin negotiations on a new agreement because we owe it to our newcomers to help

them succeed. Still, the federal government has not yet set a date for negotiations to begin, and time is running out.

Ottawa's reluctance to discuss a comprehensive new agreement with Ontario has extremely significant implications for Ontario's immigrants and Ontario's economy. To strengthen Ontario's economy, all Ontarians must be at their best. Better settlement and integration of immigrants would add tens of thousands of skilled workers to Ontario's labour force and would increase productivity and income by billions of dollars. A new comprehensive immigration agreement with the federal government is therefore vitally important.

A new comprehensive agreement would allow Ontario to become a stronger partner in immigration policy and decision-making. It would be the beginning of a made-in-Ontario solution for services and programs for our newcomers.

Back in 2005, the federal government committed to spending an additional \$920 million over five years for settlement and immigration services in Ontario. When that agreement expired in the spring, we assessed the outcomes. On the positive side, the first immigration agreement infused an additional \$713 million into Ontario's settlement and integration sector. New services resulted, such as our Welcome Centres. New partnerships, especially with our municipalities, were created and strengthened.

It is important to note that during that same five-year period, Ontario also spent \$775 million on programs and services for our newcomers.

In the area of newcomer integration, the McGuinty government has made significant progress. We have a plan that's working for Ontario's newcomers, and the McGuinty government, as one example, led the way in 2006 with the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, the first legislation of its kind in Canada. Our government's groundbreaking legislation is breaking down barriers for internationally trained professionals who want to practise, as they should, in their field of expertise. Since then, other provinces such as Manitoba and Nova Scotia have followed Ontario's example by implementing similar legislation.

Ontario has also invested in bridge training programs. These programs are proving very successful. Since 2003, we have invested more than \$175 million in more than 200 bridge training programs. These programs have helped more than 40,000 newcomers put their skills to work in Ontario in more than 100 different professions. To give you a couple of examples, 80% of the participants in the construction management bridge training project at George Brown College found jobs within one year of graduation, and through the CARE bridge training program for internationally trained nurses, 90% of participants found a job within only six months of graduation. That translates, for that program alone, into almost 1,000 more nurses caring for Ontarians.

0930

At the University of Waterloo, a bridge training program for internationally trained optometrists has im-

proved the pass rate on their licensing exams from 37% to 87%, and after passing those exams, 100% of the participants are finding jobs as optometrists here in Ontario.

While these are impressive statistics, the successes achieved by the participants in these programs are truly inspiring. I'll just give a couple of examples. I met recently, a couple of weeks ago, an internationally trained veterinarian from Pakistan, Dr. Chaudhry, who immigrated to the Ottawa area. He struggled to find a job, submitting applications to Tim Hortons and gas stations, but finally, after several years and a number of attempts, he passed his certification exams in veterinary medicine and, with the help of a bridge training program funded by the government of Ontario through LASI World Skills' job match network, he found a job. He found a job working as a veterinarian in Ottawa, and he hopes that sometime in the next few years he will be able to open his own veterinary hospital.

Another example: An internationally trained early childhood educator was only able to find employment at a fast food restaurant after she arrived in Ontario, but within a year of starting her bridge training program she is now an Ontario-certified early childhood educator working in Ontario.

Lastly, an internationally trained civil engineer with 20 years' experience was unemployed. Through our bridge training program, he is now working as a structural engineer and is on the road to completing all of the requirements for licensure with Professional Engineers Ontario.

What's clear is that the McGuinty government's plan to help our newcomers is working. We are getting results. Our newcomers are benefiting from these results. But while we are making progress, we also recognize that there is much more to be done, and that is why the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement is so important to our newcomers' well-being and to their success.

While the first immigration agreement produced highly positive results for Ontario and for Ontario's newcomers, we must nonetheless remember that other federal-provincial immigration agreements have disproportionately benefited other provinces. For example, in 2009-10, federal government funding for newcomers was approximately 50% more on a per capita basis in Quebec than it was in Ontario. We don't think that's fair. It's not fair to Ontario and it's certainly not fair to our newcomers.

Ontario has a number of concerns about the current state of funding and settlement services and about decisions the federal government has made in the past several years. For example, the federal government has failed to spend \$207 million promised under the first Canada-Ontario immigration agreement. That's over \$200 million that could have been spent on employment training, language training and other settlement services, and when it comes to helping our newcomers succeed we all know that every penny counts. Ontario cannot afford to look the other way when Ottawa breaks its commit-

ment; we owe it to our newcomers. This agreement, after all, is about serving them, meeting their needs and helping them integrate quickly and effectively into their new home.

But a new agreement is also important to Ontario and all Ontarians, because Ontario's success depends, in a very real sense, on the contributions that our newcomers make to the province's economy and to the province's social fabric. Ontario needs a new comprehensive agreement that allows us to address the needs of our newcomers and the challenges that they face at the local level. We need a new agreement that eliminates duplication, closes gaps and reduces administrative complexity, all things that make it harder to serve our newcomers effectively. We need a new agreement that allows for language training and settlement services that are accessible to all immigrants, that are flexible, high quality, cohesive and results-based. We need, in short, an agreement that helps us better meet the needs of our newcomers. This is what our settlement agencies, our newcomers advocacy groups and our business organizations are saying to me. I heard this loud and clear just last Friday when I convened a Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, or COIA, summit and heard from more than 50 organizations as to how we can best serve our newcomers and help them succeed in Ontario.

For example, in the area of language training, there may be different rules depending on whether funding comes from the federal government or from the province. For newcomers trying to access these services, these kinds of administrative difficulties are a barrier to access. We believe that immigrants who have recently become citizens, as well as refugee claimants, should be eligible for language training programs. We don't want to have to turn newcomers away, like the federal government does, if they are Canadian citizens or if they are refugee claimants.

Ottawa has entered into bilateral agreements that better support newcomers in other provinces, namely in Quebec, in Manitoba and in British Columbia. The agreements enjoyed by these provinces give them much more say in decision-making, more say in administering funds and a greater ability to provide comprehensive, effective and impactful programs benefiting their newcomers. In fact, earlier this year the federal government renewed an immigration agreement with British Columbia which affirms that province's responsibility for the administration of settlement and language training programs. That is something that Ontario simply does not have, and yet Ottawa has shown little interest in sitting down and negotiating a comprehensive immigration agreement with Ontario, where almost half of the country's immigrants choose to live.

Furthermore, the federal government recently informed us that it is reducing spending on immigration services by \$53 million next year and \$59 million years after that. Ottawa's cuts to immigration spending deeply concern me, especially at a time when Ontario's immigrants have been disproportionately affected by the eco-

conomic downturn, more than other groups in Ontario. During the past several years, the federal government has made a number of decisions that greatly concern the government of Ontario. For years, Ottawa's backlog in the processing of immigration applications has meant that highly qualified individuals and potential immigrants waited up to six years to get a response to their immigration application. Now, to its credit, the federal government attempted to fix the problem. Its goal was to reduce that backlog of immigration applications. The issue is that the fix created even more problems for Ontario. In 2008, Ottawa set up a list of just 38 occupations which it determined would receive priority consideration and processing. The new selection system allowed the federal government to reject most applicants on the basis of the federally—not provincially, but federally—determined occupation list. This system is not designed to meet Ontario's needs. An immigration system that only accepts skilled workers in a limited number of fields cannot possibly meet the needs of Ontario's complex, diverse and dynamic economy. This does not work for Ontario, because our economy depends on a steady and diverse flow of skilled immigrants.

The right way to reduce this backlog is to invest more resources in the processing of applications, not to close the doors on the federal skilled workers program. The impact of the growing provincial nominee programs in other provinces has also had consequences for Ontario. Although we support the efforts of all provinces to meet their own unique immigration needs and requirements, it cannot come at Ontario's expense. Those nominee "landings" through the PNPs come out of the already compromised skilled worker category, reducing even further skilled landings in Ontario and creating competition between provinces for highly skilled immigrants. Competing against ourselves is no way to compete against other global jurisdictions for the best and the brightest.

0940

Of course, the additional work required to attract and process these provincial nominee program applications comes with no funding and no resources from the federal government, and because these individuals get priority federal processing, our skilled backlog continues.

Today, Ontario is experiencing the combined effect of these federal government decisions. Today, less than one half of all newcomers coming to Ontario are in the skilled category, selected on the basis of our labour market needs. Over just the past five years, the number of immigrants admitted to Ontario in the skilled worker category has dropped by 42%. This, as we all know, has a significant and negative impact on the province's long-term well-being.

This economic argument, this, if you will, business case for diversity is one that Ontario's employers understand well. In communities like Hamilton and Brampton I've had the opportunity to meet with chambers of commerce and boards of trade, and have spoken to them about why immigrants, as they know, are so important to the future of Ontario. In this knowledge-based global

economy, they know that we need a labour force that has the education and the skills so that Ontario can lead, so Ontario can innovate and so Ontario can grow its economy and ensure that future generations have the best education and the best health care possible.

Today's economic reality means that the contributions of Ontario's talented newcomers will once again be called upon to add strength and vigour to our existing pool of skilled labour. But let's be clear: Ontario faces a growing shortage of skilled workers. The Conference Board of Canada predicts that this shortage will rise to more than half a million positions by the year 2030; that's 500,000 positions potentially going unfilled, and skilled newcomers are going to be essential to filling these gaps. So I can say without reservation that immigration and the diverse, highly skilled workforce that will result is an economic imperative for Ontario.

To capitalize on this economic opportunity, to be competitive in today's global economy, we need to get creative. We cannot allow the challenges of integrating skilled newcomers to stop us from embracing the enormous potential that they bring with them to Ontario. Skilled newcomers bring their own unique brand of international experience and they bring with them contacts and language skills to give Ontario businesses the competitive edge. Ontario's newcomers are the people who, if we open our doors to them, can open doors for us. After all, almost half of all new arrivals in Canada choose to settle in Ontario. Two out of three adult newcomers to our province arrive with post-secondary education or training.

The McGuinty government is using the opportunity of negotiating a new comprehensive agreement to press for a new partnership with Ottawa, a partnership that gives us an immigration system that better serves the local needs of our newcomers and, through it, improves Ontario's economic prospects. At the end of the day, Ontario's goal is to deal effectively with the significant demographic and economic challenges under way in the province. We all know that the sooner we have an agreement that improves services for immigrants, the better for our immigrants and ultimately the province of Ontario.

Ontario therefore calls on the federal government to commence negotiations immediately on a comprehensive new agreement that provides the funding, the planning and the management necessary for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper. We call on the federal government to meet its obligations, to fulfill its promise under the first COIA agreement and spend the more than \$200 million that is still owed to Ontario's newcomers.

With this resolution today, this House is reiterating our commitment in no uncertain terms to Ontario's newcomers. We know that Ontario's success depends to a large degree on their success. We know fundamentally that our diversity is one of our greatest strengths. And we know that under a new partnership, a partnership that works for Ontario and that, most importantly, works for our newcomers, we can better serve our newcomers and help them succeed in Ontario, because when our newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to rise on the motion before the House today. Immigration, as members of the assembly likely know, is an issue very near and dear to my heart, as a grandson of immigrants from what was then Czechoslovakia. If elected Premier, I will be the first Premier in Ontario whose family directly immigrated to Canada from outside of the British Isles. That first is a testament to the amazing culture of opportunity that this province has offered immigrants from across the world, and particularly to those who came in the early to mid-20th century.

Through my grandparents and my own parents, I learned the values that helped to make them successful in their new home, that gave them the courage to leave the old country for a place where they didn't speak the language, didn't fully understand the culture, but knew that if they worked hard and played by the rules, they would provide a better life for their children and for their grandchildren. It wasn't easy. The only settlement programs back then tended to be hard hands and strong backs. My grandfather worked in construction, he worked on a farm, he worked in the lumber industry, he was one of the labourers who helped to build this province. He eventually then saved up enough money to bring the family across the ocean and set up a small business in Sarnia, Ontario.

But no doubt as we move into the 21st century, challenges faced by new Canadians today are difficult ones. The world is more complex. Rules around getting their credentials recognized and accessing the skilled labour market continue to build, and in spite of a lot of talk from the McGuinty government, these barriers have not come down. Today, newcomers need a variety of training to be full partners in the Ontario economy, to help address our looming skilled labour shortage, and most importantly to help them put their considerable energy, expertise and entrepreneurship fully to work and provide for their families. That means we need settlement programs that respond to the needs of newcomers and reflect the needs of Ontario communities both.

This motion is asking for more money to be spent in Ontario, but it doesn't say where, how or in what particular programs. It doesn't outline how the province will help the federal government to ensure money that is being spent in Ontario will actually produce the intended results. It doesn't even say what the results should be. This is why I have concerns—as my colleague from Halton said earlier on, a bit of the pot calling the kettle black.

Let's look at the McGuinty Liberals' record when it comes to immigration issues. In 2007, then Citizenship and Immigration Minister Mike Colle, the member from Eglinton—Lawrence, was forced to resign during the slushgate scandal, after the Auditor General found \$32 million was handed out to Liberal-friendly groups without an “open, transparent and accountable process.” Sadly, when it comes to the McGuinty Liberal govern-

ment, it's not what you do, it's who you knew that counted. This runs absolutely counter to the values of newcomers who came to Ontario, who believed in a level playing field, a fair shake based on their skills, not based on their connections with a particular government.

I don't think anyone will forget the one particular example where the Ontario Cricket Association asked for a grant of \$150,000 and the McGuinty government doled out \$1 million in taxpayer funds. This money was handed out to groups who happened to know the minister personally, where they went to the right minister's fundraiser. In some cases, they didn't even have to apply for the cash; it was simply handed out.

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After months of dithering and delay and stonewalling—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Denying.

Mr. Tim Hudak:—denial, finally Premier McGuinty and then the minister himself acknowledged that the money was often doled out with little or no paperwork whatsoever. The spending controls on the grants, according to the Auditor General, were “the worst that we've ever seen.” It's frightening. It runs counter to the culture of Ontarians. It runs counter to the culture of newcomers who want to call Ontario home to see that kind of cash handed out with no paperwork and no transparency, based on personal connections.

And now the McGuinty government is asking for \$207 million more to be spent but doesn't say when, where or how to spend it.

We want to help the province support programs for new Canadians. That's why I would like to propose an amendment, by removing the words “and calls on the federal government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by investing in services for newcomers and therefore asks the federal government to fulfill their commitment under the recently expired five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement to spend the outstanding” and then “promised to Ontario's newcomers and immediately,” and replacing this with “and calls on the provincial government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by promoting the investment in services for newcomers through a fully costed plan including accountability and performance measures, which will allow the federal government to spend the” and then “that was not applied for under the existing Canada-Ontario immigration agreement and will aid the province in commencing”—and I have copies of that for the Chair.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Mr. Hudak has proposed an amendment, by removing “and calls on the federal government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by investing in services for newcomers and therefore asks the federal government to fulfill their commitment under the recently expired five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement to spend the outstanding” and “promised to Ontario's newcomers and

immediately,” and replacing it with “and calls on the provincial government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by promoting the investment in services for newcomers through a fully costed plan including accountability and performance measures, which will allow the federal government to spend the” and “that was not applied for under the existing Canada-Ontario immigration agreement and will aid the province in commencing”—okay.

Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Madam Speaker. So the motion would then read: “That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that Ontario receives, welcomes and benefits from the contributions of nearly half of all new immigrants coming to Canada and calls on the provincial government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by promoting the investment in services for newcomers through a fully costed plan, including accountability and performance measures, which will allow the federal government to spend the \$207 million that was not applied for under the existing Canada-Ontario immigration agreement and will aid the province in commencing negotiations on a comprehensive new agreement that provides the adequate funding, planning, and governance necessary for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper.”

If this motion passes, I believe it will help the province focus on what it needs for newcomers to best succeed in Ontario and it will help the federal government to also understand the programs it should be looking at providing.

You see, the present agreement with the federal government tripled the amount of money for settlement services in Ontario. As of March 2010, the total spending in Ontario on settlement programs and services since the COIA came into effect in 2005 was \$1.25 billion. But while the province of Ontario has seen new money for immigrant services, we have yet to make sure that the money goes where it is most needed or has measurable outcomes.

The Ontario PC caucus believes that accountability should be at the root of all government programs. For example, the provincial nominee program, since May 2007, has only attracted 722 nominees and their families as of March 31, 2010. It attracted 722 nominees in the last three years, yet this government prominently displays that they are targeting 1,000 nominees in 2010 alone, falling well short of their targets.

On OMNI TV in August, the minister said, “We think that program is just right.” I don’t understand why the minister is saying this program is right when they have fallen well short of their targets, and given the past type of slush fund that the McGuinty government has used immigration funds to advance. This is a pattern. Only an out-of-touch government would think that spectacularly failing to meet your objectives is just about right. When we see boondoggles like eHealth, which saw Liberal friends and consultants waste a billion dollars, we see clearly the need for greater accountability.

Eco taxes was a program whose partners didn’t even understand, and the government was forced to suspend it for 90 days because Premier McGuinty rushed it into place—another clear example of the lack of accountability. So it only makes sense that in the desire to create programs that are effective and actually help Ontario newcomers, we must include these types of accountability measures, and we need programs to promote economic opportunities for new Canadians.

In May, I introduced the Newcomers Employment Opportunities Act, 2010, to help Ontario lead again. If passed, the bill will lower the threshold for any immigrant investor who opens a business outside the GTA. It encourages better integration through tax incentives to employers who pay for English- or French-language training to new Canadians and it addresses the lack of transparency in the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act and the regulated professions act, preventing newcomers from pursuing careers in their field of training, given all the red tape and walls they encounter under the McGuinty government.

New Canadians and newcomers I meet in their own communities and here at Queen’s Park tell me they are eager to have their skills recognized so that they can help unlock the true potential of our great province. They are entrepreneurs who want and deserve to enjoy the prosperity of a stronger Ontario. As Ontario struggles to recover from recession, a new generation of leadership must do more than the last to tap into the education, energy, skills and experience of the people we draw to our province.

When we deliver on our promises of a level playing field and fair opportunities for all to build a better life, new Canadians and all Ontario families will prosper. So I would ask all members of the House to support my amendment to the motion so that settlement programs will respond to the needs of newcomers, reflect the needs of Ontario communities and tap into the great potential of our province. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to speak to this motion and now, I guess, to the amendment to the motion, and I do so not being the child or grandchild of immigrants and not being someone who can trace their roots to places other than the British Isles or France, but I do so as a person who worked for the immigration department for some 20 years. I worked in Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver. I worked across the Maritimes and at Toronto International Airport before it was called Pearson International Airport. I worked helping to bring immigrants, I worked with students, I worked with people who wanted to sponsor their relatives, and for a time, I even worked deporting those bad ones who needed to be sent home. It was all part of the job and understanding about immigration. And what I say today I have said in this House before, and it has never been listened to, not by this government and not by the previous government. If Ontario wants to choose and to work with immigrants

and to help them in the best possible way, then Ontario has to do much more than what is being proposed here today. Section 93 of the British North America Act states that immigration is a dual responsibility. There are only two dual responsibilities: agriculture and immigration. That's why you see that there is a Minister of Agriculture in this House and in every Legislature across the provinces, and there is a minister responsible for immigration in this House and in every Legislature across Canada, and you have dual counterparts in Ottawa.

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But what this House has not seen fit to do, what this motion does not see fit to do, what this government has not done in the past seven years, what successive governments going on before them have not done, is to seize the opportunity to actually help and assist immigrants and do what is needed to be done and what they have the authority in law to do.

It's all well and good to look at the Immigration Act, and I still have my copies and it's not substantially changed, although the number may not be the same. But part VII-General of the Immigration Act states that the federal government must consult with the provinces. They must; they shall. It's mandatory. Whether we have this motion or the amendment to the motion, those consultations are going to take place in any event. I'm absolutely confident. They've done so in the past, they will continue whether or not this motion is passed, and the consultation will be ongoing.

There are also federal-provincial agreements that must be made and that the minister—and I will read the section of the act: “The minister, with the approval of the Governor in Council, may enter into an agreement with any province or group of provinces for the purpose of facilitating the formulation, coordination and implementation of immigration policies and programs.”

The minister in Ottawa must do that, and this motion and this minister here in Ontario wants to participate in that.

But everyone is missing the boat. Everyone is missing that what absolutely needs to be done is for Ontario to be a player, to be a leader. In 1978, the government of Quebec, through the British North America Act and the authority given to them, negotiated with the federal government for its own immigration program. Ontario, since 1978, has done none of that—32 lost years. While immigrants continue to come to this province in great numbers, we have done absolutely nothing.

The Canada-Quebec agreement on immigration—as I said, 1978: What this agreement allows the province of Quebec to do—and Ontario has no such authority, nor is it asking for the authority, nor has it ever dreamed of having the authority, nor will the \$207 million ever help the immigrants in a way that Quebec does.

This is what Quebec can do: Quebec can select its own foreign nationals. Quebec has immigration visa officers strategically placed throughout the world, in order to choose those immigrants who will best help Quebec. If they need something—as the minister said—if they need

doctors, lawyers, dentists, nuclear scientists, labourers, whatever they need, they get to choose them. They get to choose the right mix for Quebec. In Ontario, we never dream of doing that. The minister can talk about that, but the minister never does anything that will allow Ontario to choose those immigrants who will best prosper in Ontario and those immigrants who will contribute the most to the overall economic benefit of the people of this province. Quebec can do it. Does the minister stand up with a motion asking for permission or a law that says we can do the same thing? No.

What else can Quebec do? Quebec has the authority to make sure that every application for permanent residence is looked at upon its merits and that a selection certificate is filed with the Ministry of Relations with Citizens and Immigration, in a manner determined by the province of Quebec. They have selection criteria. They have their own grid system. If they are looking for people with university educations in a particular field, they can choose them. If they are looking for people with academic credentials, they can choose them. If they are looking for people who are trained in skilled trades, they can choose them.

But what they can do even more is that when they sit down with a perspective immigrant somewhere in the world and that perspective immigrant has skills and abilities, they can assess them on the spot to see whether or not those skills and abilities will be recognized in the province of Quebec. So an immigrant sitting down in Burundi—just to pick one country out of the 200 around the world—will know that, as a carpenter, those skills are wanted and needed in Quebec and that they have the necessary qualifications to be called into the trade. Or if they're a dentist or a doctor or a lawyer, they can come to Quebec and they can work. The visa officer will sit down with them and assess the application—knowing full well that that's what Quebec does—and tell them, “No, if you come to Canada, and particularly to Quebec, this will not be recognized, but you can take the following courses that we will assist you with,” so that the prospective immigrant knows not that they have to jump through hoops, not that they have to go around corners, not that they have to wait in line; they'll know precisely what is going to be expected of them before the application is even finalized. And should they agree they want to come to Quebec, they know when they get to the other end, the Quebec government has all of the programs in place to assist them.

Does Ontario do that? No. Is asking for \$207 million going to do that? No. Does anything in this motion or what the minister is trying to do help immigrants in the same way as if they were coming to Quebec? The answer is no. And that is a shame, because as the minister and as everyone keeps saying, 44% of all the immigrants who came to Canada last year came to Ontario. This is the magnet, this is the place and this is the province that chooses not to assist them.

To go on: Quebec has the authority to choose temporary foreign nationals; that is, people who come in for

a short period of time to do work, who are not expected to stay in the long term but who are necessary for carrying out the economic activities of that province. Does Ontario have that authority? No. Ontario doesn't have that authority. Ontario's not even asking for that authority. If we did have that authority, we could assist the tens of thousands of people who come here on temporary work visas and could assist them in integrating or applying to remain within the province if it is discovered that their work and skills are necessary. We do not have that authority, nor is the minister asking for it. But the British North America Act and the template of Quebec allow fully for it. Why is the minister not doing that? I'm flabbergasted as to why we talk this whole thing about immigration and then do nothing about it.

What else does Quebec do? Quebec has an entire law for the integration of foreign nationals. It has an integration program, a linguistic integration service, eligibilities, financial assistance, loan guarantees and deferment of loan repayment, all set out in the act. The government of Quebec, when it gets money from the federal government—as it does because it runs its own programs—gets countless dollars more than Ontario is asking for. That's because the federal government understands that they are not providing that service, that in fact the government of Quebec is providing the service. But does Ontario want to do that? No. The minister doesn't put forward that proposal. He doesn't talk about what can be done. What he asks for is \$207 million that the federal government is supposed to hand over willy-nilly to be spent on who knows what.

I listened to the Leader of the Opposition and I listened to this motion. It's not any wonder that the federal government is sometimes reluctant to hand over money to a province, this province, that has no clear idea of what it wants to do with it. It has authorities, it can set out laws, but all it wants to do is set out motions that ask for money. I am not surprised that there has been some reluctance on the part of succeeding federal governments to give Ontario the money. I'm not surprised at all, because they have to be accountable to the people of Canada, and they know that if they give the money to Quebec, it is all spelled out in law how that money is spent and Quebec is meticulous in spending it in ways that assist new immigrants and is absolutely meticulous in spending it in ways that bring credit to the province of Quebec.

1010

What else does the Quebec law do? The Quebec law also allows for the minister to make regulations and allows for the government of Quebec to do investigations, inquiries, to give out information, to supply identification documents—provides all of that. It provides for penal provisions if people break the act or the laws, and it regulates consultants. My God, don't you think this province should be doing that? Have you not heard of the horror stories of people going into unregistered and unregulated immigration consultants and getting bad advice? I had a man come to my office this

past week, a man from India, a man with enormous credentials, a man who was working very hard, a man who came here and claimed refugee status. He had tears in his eyes. He came with his friend, who said, "I don't know what made him claim refugee status from India." The man had tears in his eyes. He admitted to me that he had no refugee claim. As a matter of fact, he couldn't even fathom an Indian, from the world's largest democracy, having a refugee claim; he couldn't even fathom it. Yet he went to an immigration consultant who told him to make this bogus claim. Do you know how much money that costs? Do you know how much money that costs the people of Canada? That costs about \$10,000 per claim that is made, with virtually no chance of success. It cost him tens of thousands of dollars, paid to the immigration consultant, to make up a whole fabrication that ultimately was not successful. He came to my office looking for my assistance because he has now found a decent and honourable lawyer, who says, "No, you should never have done that in the first place. What you should have done is you should have made an application showing economic benefit to Canada." He is making a huge contribution to a company. They cannot replace him. They are paying him \$100,000 a year, as a person who is temporarily here, because he is absolutely skilled in what he does. But he, in all likelihood, is going to have to go back to India to make that application.

I asked him, is he afraid to go back? Of course he's not afraid to go back. The bogus refugee claim was just something that someone dreamed up, because this province allows it to happen. This province, in not getting into the game, in not providing the advice to someone who is here on a temporary visa, forces them into the hands of unscrupulous immigration consultants. I think we need to regulate them. The only way we can successfully regulate those consultants is by taking an act into our own hands. But does this motion do that? No, this motion doesn't do this. This motion perpetuates what has happened in the past: for this province to go to the federal government, whether it's a Liberal government, a Conservative government, a minority government, a majority government—it doesn't matter. You go there and you ask for money. But you don't ask for any particular purpose and you don't ask for any authority to regulate what needs to be regulated.

I'm saying to this minister, I don't know why the motion is before us. The federal government and the minister, the Honourable Jason Kenney, have a duty and an obligation, as set out in statute, to consult. He's going to consult whether this motion is passed in this House or not. He is going to consult with the minister and the ministry officials on the extension or change to the program. What is more important to me, and what is more important to the tens of thousands of immigrants who call Ontario home, is what is going to be negotiated, not that negotiations take place. And what is more important is Ontario seizing the opportunity to finally do the right thing; Ontario seizing the opportunity to help immigrants; Ontario seizing the opportunity to regulate un-

scrupulous practices; Ontario seizing the opportunity to do what Quebec has done and to have an immigration act that has some teeth, that has powers and authorities, the rights to choose, the rights to regulate, the rights to punish if people run afoul of it. That's what Ontario needs, and that's not what we're hearing here today. That's not what we're hearing at all.

I am profoundly disappointed, every time this subject comes up, when I think about those people who come to Canada, when I think about the five million people who came to this country in the 21 years that I worked for the immigration department—five million people. Go to Pearson International Airport. Go to the border points. Even go to a refugee-bearing ship and see the faces of those people as they get off from wherever they've come from. See the hope in their eyes. See the hope they have, not necessarily for themselves but for their children. See what they aspire to in Canada. See how we can help them. But see how we can help them in a way that does Ontario proud, not how the federal government can shuffle them off, not how the federal government can run years and years and years of backlogs on refugee claims, some of which—and most of which—are obviously not true.

Oh, I see my time—I will continue. This is another one of my bifurcated speeches. I look forward to continuing this on the next occasion.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. It being very close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bruce Crozier: If my lovely wife, Joan, were in the members' gallery this morning, which she is not, I would want to wish her a very happy birthday.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I share something with the member from Essex. If my wife Karan was in the gallery today—but I know she's the vice-principal at St. Catherine school in Peterborough. Today is actually her birthday. Just for a historical record, she was born during the Kennedy administration and the last year of the Diefenbaker administration, just to put that into historical perspective.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Today I want to welcome students and teachers from Cornell Junior Public School in the riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, the second half today.

Mr. Dave Levac: Today in the gallery on this side we have the family of page Caelan Meggs: mother Lisa, father Randy and grandmother Sylvia Meggs. We're awfully glad that they're here today to watch the proceedings and to watch their very large-statured son take over the page's place.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm pleased to introduce Keith Pacey, who's here today from North Bay, a mem-

ber of our North Bay Regional hospital board. They're proudly opening their new facility in December and he's here to watch proceedings. I'd like to welcome Keith.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): In the Speaker's gallery today, I'd like to welcome my brother Joe Peters, who was out giving blood again today. Good for you.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today Mr. Kuo-Jan Wang, director general of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Toronto, and delegation. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

There being no further introductions, it is time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SMART METERS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. The Ontario PC caucus has uncovered documents that show that the Dalton McGuinty government was warned that his—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd remind the honourable member of the use of titles. I have allowed the term "McGuinty government," but I don't appreciate you using a first name, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: All right. Thank you, Speaker.

The McGuinty government was warned that your smart meters are broken, but the Premier is plunging ahead with his expensive experiment anyway. Premier, 21 energy distributors, including provincially owned Hydro One, said that the rush to make time of use mandatory by June 2012 doesn't give them time to fix all the problems with the meters, to fix bugs with the software to run them, and the inaccurately high bills they produce as a result.

Premier, 21 red flags were raised; why did you ignore them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleague is a staunch defender of the status quo when it comes to the electricity system as it existed in 2003 but that's not something that we're prepared to accept, because that would be irresponsible.

He calls smart meters part of an experiment, but I will remind him that they are in place in BC, Quebec, a number of American states, the United Kingdom, Italy, Sweden, New Zealand, Australia and Ireland. In particular, I note that the previous Labour government in the UK committed to smart meters in every home by 2020, but the new Conservative government said, "That's not fast enough," so they accelerated the implementation of that very program by three years.

Around the world, people know it's a smart plan to put smart meters in our homes and businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, 21 red flags were raised by distributors across the province, by your own Hydro One,

but you give them the back of your hand. And it gets worse: The Ontario Energy Board, in a letter of August 4, acknowledged “a number of distributors express the view that the setting of mandatory” time-of-use “dates is premature and inappropriate at this time....” Your own Ontario Energy Board admitted that energy distributors “may encounter extraordinary and unanticipated circumstances during the implementation” of time of use, and said that “these matters need to be addressed.”

Twenty-one distributors—your own Hydro One, your own Ontario Energy Board—raised flags, but I guess Premier Dad knows best. Premier, how much do families have to pay for your mistakes when it comes to your smart meter tax machines?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague stands against smart meters. Ontarians should know what he stands for is the continuing use of coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario. He stands against the Green Energy Act, which is about laying the foundation for a new manufacturing industry in the province of Ontario.

I want to remind my honourable colleague as well of something that the Environmental Commissioner said about smart meters. He said this:

“By reducing peak demand (which should come about through customers’ response to time-of-use prices), we avoid having to build more power plants and transmission lines....

“Going back to the same-old-same-old that did not work is not the answer.”

I could not agree more with the Environmental Commissioner.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier now twice has refused to answer the essence of the very clear question today. Premier, 21 energy distributors raised red flags, including your very own Hydro One. The OEB has similarly raised concerns about the accuracy, the bugs in the system, but you ignore them. And just like Premier McGuinty declared Saturdays as laundry days for the common people, you’re ignoring the concerns of distributors across the province about your broken smart machines, which are not only charging high bills but inaccurate bills as well.

Families today are struggling just to make ends meet. Why don’t you get that? Middle-class families are struggling to make ends meet, and you’re going through with these smart meter tax machines that are inaccurate and high-priced.

Premier, will you do the right thing? Will you suspend this program, give people a choice and get this program right?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think we have a bit of an inkling of the Conservative Party plan for electricity in the province of Ontario. They are for coal; they are against smart meters. They are against laying the foundation for a new clean technology industry through green

electricity manufacture, production, transmission and the like.

I also want to remind Ontarians that the results of their reckless price freeze that they put in place when they were in government cost Ontarians \$900 million. I would also remind them that their “leave it to the next government to take care of it” approach left our kids and grandkids with \$20 billion in stranded hydro debt. That costs Ontario families \$60 every year because they refused to take responsibility to begin to build a clean, modern, reliable electricity system.

1040

SMART METERS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier. Premier, I don’t understand. You just don’t get it. Why won’t you simply say that the meters should be accurate? Why don’t you simply say—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I will once again remind the members that if they want to have conversations amongst themselves, please allow the questioner and the person answering the courtesy to hear either the question or the answer. Those members who want to have a discussion with members on the opposite side of the House, please take those discussions outside of this chamber and do not interrupt the proceedings.

Question?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier McGuinty just doesn’t get it. Where is the sense of leadership? Why aren’t you asking the questions? Why aren’t your meters accurate? Why aren’t the bugs being fixed? The last time you ran headlong down this course without asking the questions a Premier should ask, we got the \$1-billion eHealth boondoggle that saw Liberal friendlies get fat and rich and Ontario families get nothing in return.

Premier, once again, just like with eHealth, you’re relying on computer technology that the energy industry says is not ready, isn’t reliable and is making families pay too much on their hydro bills. Why won’t you do the right thing, suspend implementation, give families a choice and fix your badly broken smart meter program?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We’re not going to return to the generation of electricity by coal in the province of Ontario. My colleague remains firmly committed to that policy. That’s not one we’re prepared to accept. We’re not going to freeze electricity rates; that cost Ontarians \$900 million last time.

There is some hope, though. There is. Some people think that progressive conservatives no longer appear anywhere on the face of the planet. In fact, they’re in the United Kingdom, and this is what they had to say about smart meters: “The rollout of smart meters will ... help us meet” some of the “long-term challenges we face in

ensuring an affordable, secure and sustainable energy supply.”

Those conservatives in the UK understand. They understand in BC, Quebec, the US, the UK, Italy, Sweden, New Zealand, Australia, Ireland and so many other places around the world. This is an important and integral part of an intelligent electricity plan that ensures that we have clean, reliable, affordable electricity.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the PC caucus understands that after seven years, you’ve surrounded yourself with elite individuals to help you make decisions, that you’ve clearly lost touch with what is happening at kitchen tables across this province. Well, let me try to make this clear once more.

Premier, you’ve heard from energy distributors, you’ve heard from Hydro One, you’ve heard from Measurement Canada, you’ve heard from the Ontario Energy Board, and you should have heard from Ontario families that your smart meter experiment has gone dangerously off the rails. And if you’re not listening, I’ll tell you one more time: Families are telling you that your tax machines are defective. They can’t afford your outrageously spiking hydro bills, let alone your HST tax grab. Why don’t you call a halt, fix the problems and give every family a choice whether they want to participate in the program or—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Very, very soon my honourable colleague will have the opportunity to support a new and important measure that I spoke of earlier today. It’s our new energy and property tax credit. In particular, it will benefit Ontario seniors—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew: I warn you to come to order, then I sit down and you start again. I just ask you to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No. I don’t need help again from armchair Speakers. What I’m trying to do is ensure that we have a good flow of question period, that there is an opportunity to question and an opportunity to answer. It’s very difficult for myself and our guests who are here in the chamber to hear the proceedings.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleagues will be very interested in and hopefully supportive of a new measure that we spoke of earlier today. It’s a new energy and property tax credit. It will be for the benefit of many Ontarians but especially seniors. In fact, two thirds of Ontario’s seniors will qualify for this new benefit. It maxes out at \$1,025. It’s a very real recognition on the part of our government that our seniors face special challenges when it comes to their property taxes and their energy costs. That’s why we’re moving forward with this particular initiative. We’re very proud to do so, and I would ask my honourable colleague

that, when the time comes, he lend his strong support to this measure that will help Ontario seniors.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know that Premier McGuinty boasts that he has a more intelligent understanding than Ontario families. This manifests in him having the gall to declare Saturday as laundry day for the common people. It’s why he lectures senior citizens to get up at 2 in the morning to do their laundry. That’s why he lectures people on shift work—to try to change their lives to fit what Dalton McGuinty defines as the right way to run a household. I think families—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I just remind the honourable member again to use titles.

It’s not helpful to have somebody stand up to question and then the opposite side of the House start to heckle that member. Again, I just caution the members. I don’t want to start to name members for heckling. I think there are much more serious offences to start to name members, but I don’t want to get to the point of having to name members for heckling. I just ask that we, as much as possible, be respectful of one another.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, people are weary of your experiments in social engineering that are driving costs through the roof. We stand with that senior citizen whom you’re telling to wash their clothes at 2 in the morning. We stand with that family that is working shift work that can’t adjust to your smart meter tax experiments. We stand with that family with young kids that can’t have them all showered and ready for school by 6 in the morning, as Premier McGuinty wants them to do.

We believe in carrots; you believe in sticks. Won’t you do the right thing? Give families a choice, because not every family is how Dalton McGuinty wants them to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It’s not helpful to make personal attacks on your own members.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: For seven years now, we’ve been working long and hard on behalf of Ontario families. And yes, I would argue that we have a more intelligent understanding of families than do the Conservatives. I will not be ashamed of saying that.

Families’ priorities are unchanging, Speaker. They are the same today as they were when you and I were growing up. Families want good-quality schools for their kids. They want access to good-quality health care for everybody in the family. They want a strong economy that supports good jobs. And when it comes to the latter, the strong economy, they understand that an important part of that foundation is a reliable, clean electricity system. That’s why we’re working so hard together to put that in place.

So, no, we will not freeze electricity rates. They did that, and that cost us \$900 million. We'll not reopen coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario. They did that, and that made our kids sick.

We understand families. They want good schools, they want good health care, they want good jobs and they want a good electricity system so that when they turn on the switch, it's there.

1050

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

I'm quite comfortable just to wait and let things drag on. I know it's a caucus day today, but it may be a little late arriving.

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. No worries; I've told my caucus members that they can get their exercise after question period.

My question is to the Premier. For the last month, the Premier has insisted that electricity rates have to go up and that people who have a problem with it should do their laundry on the weekends. People have been speaking up loud and clear over this last month, and they cannot take it anymore.

So my question is this: Is the Premier finally ready to admit that he was wrong and that people need relief?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that, given the tone and the tenor and the goodwill that infused that question, my honourable colleague will be very supportive of the new measure that I just referenced. It's a new energy and property tax credit for many Ontarians, including three quarters of Ontario seniors. It is specifically designed to help Ontario seniors address some of their property tax challenges and some of their energy costs. This is a specific, practical measure that we are putting forward, and I would ask my honourable colleague if Ontario seniors will be able to count on her support for this very important measure.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: All families, all households, are being hit and they're being hit hard by this government. They were hit hard by the unfair HST. They were hit hard by the smart meter boondoggle and sweetheart private power deals.

The Premier has ignored the pleas of Ontarians for a very, very long time. But now this mess is so big that he's finally scrambling to try to address it. We have a very simple, concrete proposal. Will the Premier take the HST off of hydro?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm afraid, on behalf of Ontario seniors, that my honourable colleague is not prepared to support their energy and property tax credit. But perhaps that is not surprising, because when we

introduced our new sales tax credit of \$260, they opposed that. When we introduced our personal income tax cut of \$200, on average, they opposed that. When we doubled the property tax grant this year to \$500, they opposed that.

When you add all those benefits up for Ontario seniors—the energy and property tax credit, the new sales tax credit, the personal income tax cut and the property tax grant—that's \$1,985 in benefits for Ontario seniors on an annual basis. In each and every instance, they continue to oppose that. You can't say you're in favour of doing things that help seniors with their costs and vote against these kinds of measures.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think that I'm very proud to have opposed everything that this government has done, and I would say the vast majority of Ontarians agree with me, as per the Toronto Star poll today.

Ontarians simply just cannot afford to pay any more. They can't afford to pay for more smart meters that simply don't work—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I say again that it is very helpful that members be respectful when somebody is speaking. I will make reference to the official opposition, to a member who just made a comment as the leader of the third party was speaking. The leader of the third party was respectful when your leader was speaking, and I just ask that, as much as possible, we try and tone the heckling down and let individuals ask questions and answer questions.

Please continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: They can't afford to pay more for smart meters that simply don't work. They can't afford to pay more to pad the profits of private power utilities or even public power utilities. They can't afford to pay more, period. That is the point.

When will we see a plan that will provide real relief for all Ontario families who very desperately need it? Will the Premier take the HST off of hydro today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think there was a telling slip on the part of my honourable colleague when she said that she doesn't support anything that we've done. I think that responsible opposition demands more than just continuing opposition. At some point in time, you have to put forward some positive, constructive policy proposals.

My honourable colleague says that she is concerned about prices that Ontarians have got to grapple with. But again, I want to return to a very specific, practical measure that will be before this Legislature very shortly. It's our new energy and property tax credit. It's valued at \$1.3 billion every year. That is real, meaningful support for over three quarters of Ontario seniors. The benefit can go up to \$1,025 on an annual basis to help them with their energy costs and their property taxes.

Again, I say to my honourable colleague, will she stand up in support of Ontario seniors by supporting that particular measure?

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. My office has been flooded with messages from families and seniors worried about escalating hydro bills, no doubt about it. Connie Falcone from the GTA writes this: "As a single mom, and no wage increase in two years, it's very difficult to make ends meet. My latest bill increased by \$80"—perhaps the energy ministry would be interested in this. "This is too much for one person to absorb."

Instead of a knee-jerk response that doesn't help all struggling Ontario families, why won't the Premier just take the HST off of hydro?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague knows that the HST is part of a comprehensive package of tax reforms. It's accompanied by a personal income tax cut that my honourable colleague opposes. In fact, it's accompanied by \$12 billion in cuts for people over the course of the next three years. My colleague opposes each and every one of those.

I want to remind her again of that very important report put out by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which I would commend to my colleague. The title says it all: Not a Tax Grab After All. That report specifically says that when it comes to low-income families, they come out ahead when you throw everything into the mix, middle-income families come out about the same and highest-income families come out a little bit behind. That's a fair approach to dealing with some really important issues. That's why we put that in place.

I would ask my colleague again to support specific measures that we bring to this House on a regular basis to help relieve some of the financial burden for families and seniors in particular.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier likes to conveniently forget that the authors of that report have actually said that they don't support the harmonized sales tax. Nonetheless, all over Ontario, hydro bill concerns have been growing, and that's what my question is about.

John Sauve from Val Caron writes: "I would like to see what he can do for us seniors about the hydro and the HST that has tripled on my hydro bill." The NDP's proposal would ease the concerns of people like Mr. Sauve by taking the HST off of hydro. Why won't the Premier just agree?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's good to have an opportunity to talk about our plan, because they don't have one. It's also a good opportunity to refresh Ontarians' memories with respect to what they did when they were in government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe North and the member from Hamilton East will please come to order—Oxford as well, please, and Durham and Leeds–Grenville.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And Durham again.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And Renfrew one and Renfrew two.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague is asking us to freeze hydro rates. We're not prepared to do that.

I want to remind Ontarians of what they did when they were in government, because that's always informative. They raised hydro rates by 40%. During their five years in government, they built no new electrical supply in Ontario—not one megawatt. They paid \$150 million to cancel Ontario Hydro's lifeline with Manitoba. In fact—perhaps this is the most galling of all—they ended all conservation initiatives. Those savings would have equalled 5,200 megawatts by the year 2000 had we only maintained those that were already in place. That's their legacy; it's abysmal when it comes to electricity in the province of Ontario.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Until this Premier wakes up and realizes what's going on out there today, I am going to continue to raise the stories that Ontarians are bringing to me, stories like the one that was shared by J. Paul Roberts from Kitchener, who says his hydro bill went up by 18% since last year—just since last year—and Maureen Cain in Ottawa, who got a shock when she opened her \$411 bill, and Earl Drozdowski in Acton, who saw an \$85 increase in his hydro bill and writes, "I received my hydro bill today and was floored!" These are real people today who want real relief.

My question is, when will the Premier finally start listening to them and do the right thing and simply take the HST off of hydro?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's never enough when it comes to explaining to Ontarians what it is we're doing and why we're doing it. I just want to remind my honourable colleague again of what we inherited here by way of electricity supply circumstances. We were in a terrible state. There were regular brownouts. We were at risk of a province-wide blackout. There had been no new generation or transmission built in a long time and the only plan put forward by the former government was to put in place diesel generators in the downtown cores of our cities. That was obviously irresponsible, untenable and unsustainable.

We've made massive investments in new generation and in new transmission. We're cleaning up our air at the same time by shutting down coal-fired generation and we're laying the foundation for an entire new industry of green electricity in the province of Ontario.

People know what has happened to manufacturing in Ontario. They know it's under attack with the advent of globalization. They know we're going to have to do something to move forward. An important part of our electricity plan is about laying that new foundation for new jobs in the manufacturing sector right here in Ontario, serving—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SMART METERS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. When it comes to your smart meter initiative, Hydro One and energy utilities warned you about computer software defects, Measurement Canada concerns and other problems that render inaccurately high bills that families must pay. Your crown corporation also warned you of capital cost overruns to install your smart meter tax machines in rural Ontario in time for your urgent deadline.

In another out-of-touch, Marie Antoinette moment, you said that you “acknowledge distributors may encounter extraordinary and unanticipated circumstances during implementation of time-of-use pricing.”

Just how much extra cake will it cost families to pay for your failed energy experiment?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for the question. I want to go back to a report that I discovered called Energy for the Future. It was a report published in February 2006. In this report, it says the following—I think this is important—“We have to invest in conservation—to offset demand. We have to invest in demand management—to shift peaks in consumption to off-hours.” That’s what time-of-use is all about. I think we all know that. Guess who wrote this report? It came from a task force from the Progressive Conservative Party, chaired by the MPP for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Also a member of that task force was the MPP for Mississippi Mills.

It’s very obvious. The Tories have done this from day one. When it comes to having to make the difficult—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Premier may think he has a more intelligent understanding than Ontario families, but his answers to the problems that utilities and families raise about so-called smart meters are simplistic. You’re following the same pattern as eHealth. Real and substantial problems with your expensive experiments emerge, but instead of fixing them, you laud the goal and the ideal, attack the whistle-blowers and ignore the problem.

Ontario families paid over a billion dollars for an eHealth system that is still not functioning. How much more will you make families pay when your latest experiment goes awry?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I said before, in 2006 this very member stood and wrote a report in support of time-of-use meters. Today, as is typical of the Tories here in the province of Ontario, when things become challenging, they run and hide. They don’t have the courage to make the important decisions we need to make to ensure that we have a modern energy system in this province.

The same decision is being made in the United Kingdom. The same decision is being made in the United States. The same decision is being made in New Zealand. The same decision is being made in Australia. The same decision is being made in British Columbia. We are global leaders, and we’re proud of that. The rest of the world is following Ontario because we’re going to modernize—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It’s not helpful.

I would also remind the honourable minister of a former Deputy Speaker, Mr. Bert Johnson, who reminded that when the Speaker is standing, he’s the only one to be standing.

We are halfway through question period right now. I am starting to get sore ears.

I have guests who have just arrived from Elgin county, and I would like to see all members set a very good example for the Van Brenk family while they’re here.

New question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Premier: Every time Ontarians open another bill, they get the shock of their lives. Monday, it’s the hydro bill. Tuesday, it’s the property tax bill. Wednesday, it’s car and home insurance bills. Ontarians can barely keep their heads above water. Why does the McGuinty government always side with the powerful insurance companies?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: A party that raised insurance rates 53% has no business making those kinds of claims.

When it comes to families, will the member and his—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. We are halfway through question period. I’m going to warn members that as reluctant as I am about it, I will have to start naming members. Our guests need to be able to hear questions and answers.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Will the member and his party opposite support our energy and property tax credit for seniors, which will put more than a billion dollars into the pockets of hard-working Ontario families and our seniors?

Why did that member and his party vote against the northern electricity industrial rate, and why did they vote against the energy tax credit for northern residents?

Our plan is about building a stronger economy for our children. It is about creating jobs, and it is about ensuring that all Ontarians have a bright and prosperous future. It’s a plan that’s working.

It speaks volumes that that party—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On September 1, it was the McGuinty government that slashed auto insurance benefits. Accident victims are going to be forced to pay for rehabilitation out of their own pockets, and all this at a time of rising insurance premiums. Why has the McGuinty government caved once again to the powerful insurance lobby and abandoned Ontario drivers and innocent accident victims?

1110

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We are getting rid of abuse in the system to save consumers money. The member opposite wants to stand up for large private health care organizations. He wants to ignore the reality. He doesn't want to tell the people of Ontario that our benefits across a range of benefits are equal to or better than everywhere else in Canada. As is typical of that member and his party—which promised public auto insurance but when they came to power killed it; which raised car insurance rates 53%—he doesn't want to tell the whole story. He wants to stand up for private health care delivery. He wants to stand against Ontario consumers.

That's why we've kept the price of insurance relatively equal over seven years. The people of Ontario see through you. They see through your party, and they'll give you a very strong message next year at this time.

SMART METERS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Rising energy costs are certainly a concern in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. And one of the concerns I hear about is smart-metering and time-of-use pricing. The young families that I see and talk to in my riding are parents who are both working, they're coming home to spend time with their children, and for the most part they don't really get to the chores until after the kids are in bed. Hearing the opposition talk about doing laundry late at night as if it's something very unusual or the only choice that these parents have makes me want to ask the minister to explain to them what time-of-use pricing is, and also for my constituents.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for raising this important question. As she notes, time-of-use pricing is intended to encourage customers to shift their consumption off of peak use. Over time, that means less necessity for investment in expensive new generation and transmission to meet peak demand. The member may find it useful to know that, at present, under the time-of-use schedule over 82% of all hours in the week fall outside of on-peak times.

I know the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has some of the hardest-working farmers around in her riding, and they're working hard to adjust, of course, to time of use, and some of those farmers do need to run their farms at all hours. So I can understand the member's interest in time of use, and I can assure the member that we're working hard to ensure we have a very good balance as we move forward with this new initiative.

Smart meters and time of use are about modernizing an outdated, inefficient system and giving consumers options with respect to consumption as well as—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I want to thank the minister for mentioning the fact that we need to upgrade our transmission system. That is certainly something that is very critical to the stray voltage issue for those farmers.

But there's also a misconception that time of use forces people to use energy—and intensive energy—at really unrealistic times, and there's also a sense that smart meters exist solely to enable time-of-use pricing. There's a notion that smart meters are an Ontario phenomenon and a one-of-a-kind experiment.

My question to the minister: In the experience of other jurisdictions, can you tell us what other benefits have been derived from smart meters?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member is absolutely right: Smart meters and time of use are not just about the prospect of consumption management and providing people with a motivation to shift their usage to off-peak hours. That's important, but building a smart electricity grid is about much more than that. It's about helping local distributors pinpoint and respond more quickly to power outages. It's about providing Ontarians with more precise readings of energy consumption, doing away with estimates and on-site measurements. It's about new, efficient meters that do not have to be manually read, reducing the number of field visits local utilities have to make to read and service old meters. It's about reducing tampering and theft of electricity. It's about long-term environmental benefits as a result of load shifting, and it's about nurturing a culture of conservation.

Ontario is definitely a leader, but we're not alone. The United Kingdom, New Zealand, Ireland, Italy, Spain, France, Sweden and Australia, to name a few, are hot on the path—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Premier. Here's a question Justice McMurtry won't answer because you deliberately left it out of the terms of his review: Why didn't Premier McGuinty announce the G20 law that affected access to a large portion of Toronto?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We received a number of real and I think very legitimate concerns about a very old law which served as the foundation for a measure that we put in place. We think that the responsible thing to do in the circumstances is to take a long, hard look at that law, and that's what we've asked Mr. Justice Roy McMurtry to do for us. We want to give him the time, and we've given him all of the breadth that he needs to take a look at this particular law, and we're very much looking forward to his advice.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: A pattern has developed where the Premier hangs public servants out to dry in order to make himself look good. You did it with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I withdraw that comment.

You did it with Kelly McDougald, formerly of the OLG. You left a cloud hanging over bureaucrats after the OPP raided three ministries and raided the Ontario Realty Corp. You're doing it with our valued police officers with the G20 law, which was your job to announce. The former community safety minister still has his limousine, and nothing in the terms of the McMurtry review will change that.

If you won't ask yourself the right questions, I will. Who is responsible for keeping the G20 law a secret from the public, and why did you feel the need to lie about it?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm glad that the member mentioned this particular issue, because he would know that our Ombudsman has announced that he is going to launch an inquiry into very narrow parts of the G20 summit. One of the things that the Ombudsman is looking into is, first of all, the promulgation of the particular regulation and the communications around that regulation. I'm looking forward with great anticipation to the Ombudsman's report on that and the recommendations that flow from that.

We've also asked Justice McMurtry, a former Attorney General and a former Solicitor General in the Progressive Conservative government of Bill Davis, and an eminent jurist, to look at a law which in fact is many, many years old—it was enacted during wartime—to give us some recommendations on how that law might be changed and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Labour. On September 10, two migrant agricultural workers, Paul Roache and Ralston White, died after exposure to toxic fumes while working in a closed vat at a farm near Ayton. Will the minister order an inquest into the deaths, to find out if the accident could have been prevented?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: First off, let me thank the member for the question and her concerns regarding this tragic loss. I've had the opportunity to speak with the member in regards to this issue, and I think I speak for everyone in this chamber, in this House, when I say that we are all saddened to hear about this tragic incident. I

also understand how difficult a time this must be for those deceased workers' families and for their colleagues.

What I can say is that we want the answers. We want the answers to how this occurred, and that's why my ministry officials are investigating the specific circumstances about this case. Our first priority is to ensure that the Occupational Health And Safety Act was followed. When it comes to health and safety in Ontario, regardless of classification or status of a worker here, they are all protected equally. So our government—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The minister will know that under the current Occupational Health and Safety Act, there is no real protection for migrant workers. When a migrant worker raises a health or safety concern, such as one regarding dangerous conditions in a confined space at work, they can be immediately removed from the country by an employer wishing to silence them.

So I ask again: Will the minister take the right steps to address this and provide migrant workers with some protection? Hundreds of thousands of union members across Canada would like to know the answer.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Just to correct the record for the member, yes, farm workers are protected under the Occupational Health and Safety Act here in Ontario, and it was this government, in 2006, that made that happen.

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What I should note is that these workers do come to Ontario under a federal program, and I have encouraged and I have written to the federal government that they need to fix this program that is broken and flawed. That is something that I encourage the member also to do.

We are working closely to protect workers who work on farms. Under our government, what I can say is that we've doubled the number of health and safety inspectors. One hundred of those inspectors are trained on farm safety and are doing proactive inspection. That's under our government, and we've tripled the number of inspections and orders issued on farms—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Energy. This past August, I had the opportunity to visit Atikokan, in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and announce our government's plan to convert the Ontario Power Generation plant in that community to burn biomass. I can tell the Minister of Energy that my constituents are excited to see that OPG's first biomass-fuelled power station will be located in northwestern Ontario.

The environmental benefits of shifting from coal to biomass are obvious, but for some people the economic implications may be less apparent. The Atikokan station is a critical part of the community, and a transition of this

nature is not a simple process, so my question to the Minister of Energy is this: What sort of economic impacts can the people of Atikokan expect to see during this conversion process and beyond?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's through this member's leadership and tenacity that this landmark conversion is going forward at the Atikokan generating station and a whole new made-in-Ontario industry is opening up in the northwest. This member worked tirelessly to make that happen.

I can say that in addition to the OPG jobs that are being retained at the station to assist the conversion and subsequent running of the biomass facility, 200 construction jobs will be created in the interim, along with a 25-employee wood pellet fuel manufacturing plant that will be located nearby.

I want to share with you the words of the mayor of Atikokan when he summed up, I think, the feelings of the community in saying, "This is splendid news for Atikokan. We are very grateful to Bill Mauro, our MPP; the Minister of Energy ... ; and the entire McGuinty government for this great announcement. It shows that they really care about Atikokan and northwestern Ontario and we thank them very much for this."

These are exciting times for northern Ontario, and I know that my friend—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I thank the minister for the compliment. I know that my constituents appreciate that OPG will be maintaining a robust presence in Atikokan, and the minister makes a good point about biomass and the job potential on the fuel manufacturing end of things. Certainly the prospect of having this kind of industry as a permanent tenant in the north, with the shift to cleaner forms of energy starting to take place around the world and the potential for export, is something I think the forestry industry would be very interested in.

Speaker, through you to the minister, have you looked at the potential for partnership with Ontario's forestry sector with respect to the manufacturing of biofuel pellets for consumption here and abroad?

Hon. Brad Duguid: To the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: May I also add my compliments to my colleague from Thunder Bay—Atikokan for his determination and dedication—a remarkable job.

Certainly, I'm glad to speak about the new partnerships that are happening in the biomass and the forestry sector, and may I say, our government's forest sector prosperity fund has already helped substantially in this area. The fund was established in 2005 to stimulate capital investment and revitalize competitiveness in the forestry sector, and to date the program has disbursed well over \$34 million in grants to support these capital projects.

A very exciting example of how this program has supported green energy initiatives is the \$20.7 million that went to the AbitibiBowater operation in Fort Frances

for their biomass cogeneration plant: a tremendous project. Because of the funding provided for this plant, Fort Frances can generate enough green energy to power about 30,000 homes. This is great for the community, great for the industry—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John O'Toole: The question is to the Minister of Government Services. If we recap the recent history of financial blunders by the Liberal government, this is just a part list of what we'll find: millions wasted on eHealth, the eco tax, the HST and the failed smart meters. Further, over the summer we learned that the OPP raided some provincial ministries and are investigating so-called financial transaction irregularities. Now we've also learned of investigations of irregularities at Ontario Realty Corp.

Minister, since you're taking the lead on accountability for the McGuinty government, can you now assure the people of Ontario that there is no other bid rigging, fraud or kickbacks taking place at this time under your watch?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. The member from Durham would like an answer to his question. I'm going to ask the minister to provide that, please.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: This is an interesting question. I just want to tell the member opposite that, to the best of my knowledge, there is no other information that I have available.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: That's a very disappointing response, Minister. The media reports that the alleged offences involved amounts estimated at over \$400,000. This is in the media that you and I should both be reading, but it appears that only I'm reading it. Who knows how much is at stake at the Ontario Realty Corp.? Yet there's not even a peep from your government about voluntary investigations into spending practices in your government—clearly from your answer.

Where is the accountability? Have they not learned anything from the eHealth scandal? How can the people of Ontario trust the McGuinty government, given its reckless spending, its multi-billion-dollar tax grab and its wait-and-see attitude to learning about the OPP investigation this summer?

Minister, when are you going to release some information on ongoing OPP investigations on fraud under your watch?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Clearly, the member knows that the police are investigating. The police will do their proper work, and they will eventually release a report. I think the member should have patience.

But I want to tell him that, on accountability, he has no right to give us any lectures, because they are the ones who have put—you know, they didn't want to disclose

any information under freedom of information; now he's giving us a lecture on accountability. We have actually made transactions more transparent. We have brought in more corporations under the freedom-of-information act. So, really, he doesn't have any right to give any lectures on that front.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Today, we learned that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable members know that there is a provision in the standing orders that if they are not satisfied with an answer, they can call for a late show. The minister has finished his answer. I don't need other members continuing to try and question the minister. So use the tools that are available to you, and utilize the late show.

Leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Again, to the Premier: Today, we learned that Horizon Utilities wants to raise distribution rates by 12% in Hamilton and St. Catharines. The ever-rising cost of hydro under this government, including the 8% HST, has Hamiltonians hurting from hydro shock.

Susan Surowaniec of Hamilton writes: "I am one of the unemployed in Hamilton and this could not have come at a worse time. We are struggling to make ends meet and all we get is take, take, take. When is someone going to give us something for a change?"

Why won't the Premier exempt hydro from the HST and give people like Susan a break?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm sure the member understands that Horizon Utilities has applied to the OEB for a rate application, which is what they do. We don't own Horizon Utilities; that's owned by the city of Hamilton and the city of St. Catharines. So if the member is trying to tie that in with our responsibilities, that's not unlike some of the things she tried to do last week, where the Ontario Energy Board soundly corrected the numbers that she put out.

But I think one thing she would want to share with her constituents in Hamilton is the good news that the Premier announced this morning for 740,000 Ontario seniors that are going to see an increase in tax relief—an increase in tax relief that's going to help some of those seniors address some of the challenges that come with rising energy costs. That's 2.8 million Ontarians who are going to see tax relief totalling \$1.2 billion annually. That's something that I think her—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1130

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Hamiltonians are worried sick that they're not going to be able to pay their hydro bills.

Pat and Mike from Hamilton write this: "We are a family of five—two parents, three kids. We have never

had a hydro bill anywhere near to the one we just received—\$648. Thanks HST!"

Hamilton's Robert Marshall has this to say: "I am on pension. My wife and I stay up late in order to do our laundry when we can afford to do it! Nothing personal but McGuinty has no idea what he has done."

The Premier could make—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the honourable members, notwithstanding the fact that she's reading a quote, of my ruling earlier.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier could make hydro bills more affordable today. They could do it right now by taking the HST off of hydro. Why is he refusing to do anything to help Hamiltonians and the people of St. Catharines?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, last week the member opposite lost all credibility with numbers when she put numbers out to the public, to try to get a headline, that were 500% wrong—not double, not triple—five times wrong. That's something, I think, that she's going to have to look herself in the mirror—because that's not just a miscalculation; that's a gross miscalculation.

What I want to say is that this morning the Premier had some great news for Ontario seniors in Hamilton and right across this province: 740,000 Ontario seniors are going to see an increase in tax relief. Some 2.8 million Ontarians will see tax relief, totalling \$1.2 billion. That's an increase of \$525 million over the original 2009 property tax credit. That's good news for Ontario families, and in particular that's good news for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. David Oraziotti: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Last month, you came to Sault Ste. Marie as part of your construction safety awareness campaign and visited the site where the new \$15-million Francis H. Clergue public elementary school is being built. As you saw, Minister, the construction workers at the site are taking safety precautions very seriously and the project is moving along smoothly.

In my riding, we're fortunate to have a number of other large and small construction projects under way, and I want to be sure that everyone working on these sites and sites across Ontario is just as safe as the workers you visited.

Minister, now that your construction safety campaign is finished, can you tell us what else you are doing to protect workers in my riding and across Ontario?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for bringing the construction safety campaign to Sault Ste. Marie. It was a great success, and I want to thank everyone from ridings across the province that I visited this summer to bring the message on-site.

This campaign is a call to action. It's a grassroots campaign—it's on the ground, it's with the workers, it's with the employers—and it highlights our workplace

safety message. A key component to the campaign was our toll-free number that allows the general public, anybody, to be able to call in if they see a safety risk on a construction site.

Further, if you go by construction sites across the province today, you will see vivid images and a message, and the message is: "Make sure that you are safe today so that can you go home tonight." We want to make sure that message is loud and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. David Oraziotti: Earlier this year, you also announced an inspection blitz focusing on fall hazards in the construction industry. Fall injuries account for about 20% of lost-time injuries, making them one of the leading causes of lost-time injuries in Ontario workplaces.

According to the WSIB, the average cost of a lost-time injury in 2009 was over \$25,000, and the cost to business is estimated at four times that. This doesn't take into account the human cost of a serious injury, which is immeasurable.

Minister, can you report back to the House the results of this safety blitz and what your ministry is doing to protect construction workers in Ontario?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Yes, the member is right: Following the campaign, we had a 90-day safety enforcement blitz that visited 2,800 Ontario construction sites. Inspectors continue today to have zero tolerance when it comes to violations of our Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations in relation to fall hazards. We're shutting down work sites where we see these violations occurring. In total, we have issued over 3,000 orders.

The top four concerns on construction sites are guard-rails, non-suspended scaffolds, fall protection systems and worker training and records.

Safety is a shared responsibility between the workers, the employers, the government, the WSIB: everybody coming together to make sure that those workers get home safe and sound.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. On March 22, my office filed a freedom-of-information request with the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. It's now been more than six months and we've still not received the requested documents. On August 12, the Higher Education Quality Council sent us a letter indicating the records were assembled. On August 18, we sent them a cheque. On August 26, they cashed the cheque, and on September 9, after we still didn't receive the documents, we wrote another letter asking where they are. There has been no response.

Why is the Premier withholding these documents and what are they hiding at the Higher Education Quality Council?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: As the honourable member is aware and as he's outlined, there's a process by which members can request information under access to information, and I'll certainly follow up on the concerns that he brought here today.

This gives me an opportunity to speak a bit about the Higher Education Quality Council, which is an organization that was brought forward as part of the Reaching Higher plan to advise government on moving forward in the area of higher education. I've been very impressed with the research projects they've undertaken and the advice that they have provided the government as we continue to strengthen our post-secondary education system. We have now 140,000 more students in our province's colleges and universities since we took office, and I think it's incumbent upon all of us to get the best advice and research on how we can make sure that the system continues to grow and is enhanced.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: The minister would know full well that we've requested these documents. There's something fishy. It doesn't pass the smell test over there.

The last time I got freedom-of-information documents from the education quality council we found out that the chair had bought a \$500 watch from Birks, and only after I raised it in the Legislature did he write a cheque to reimburse that. We also found out they were spending thousands and thousands of dollars on hospitality. So if you won't come clean, if you won't tell us what's in the documents or release the documents, we can only assume that the Higher Education Quality Council has joined the likes of eHealth, Cancer Care Ontario, Ontario Lottery and Gaming and the WSIB in squandering hard-earned tax dollars.

Minister, why haven't you ordered the council to release the freedom-of-information documents?

Hon. John Milloy: I indicated that I will look into the matter for the member. I would also indicate, in reference to his comments at the beginning, that the Higher Education Quality Council, as well as all agencies of that type, have adopted the new rules for expenses that were brought forward earlier this year by the government. Again, I reiterate the important work that has been going on with the Higher Education Quality Council.

Let me share with the honourable member some of the research projects that are ongoing right now with HEQCO: Aboriginal Self-Identification and Student Data in Ontario's Post-Secondary Education System; Challenges and Opportunities; Determinants of University Retention; Discovering the Benefits of a First Year Experience Program for Under-represented Students; and I could go on. I'm proud—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, you will know that your ministry is

undergoing a review of possibly closing a number of provincial labs around the province. Can you tell me categorically that you're not going to close the lab in the city of Timmins?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can tell you is that we are working very, very hard to get the best value for every dollar we spend when it comes to health care. What I have to say is that we are looking at labs. I cannot speak to that specific case right now.

But I tell you, the people I talk to, when they think of health care, they think of our front-line workers; they think of our doctors, our nurses, our personal support workers; they think of people who actually provide care. So when it comes to the future of health care in this province, if we want a health care system that's here for our kids and for our kids' kids, we've got to look hard at every dollar we spend, and that includes looking at labs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, these are front-line workers. These are people who provide an essential service to our health care system across northeastern Ontario. That lab has been there for over 50 years. People in the city of Timmins, people in the region and the medical community have been using it for over 50 years. I ask you again a very simple question: Will you say today, right now, that you will not close that lab in the city of Timmins?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm happy to let the House know that a review of the labs was conducted in 2007 by an independent consulting firm to assess the service delivery model when it comes to labs. In keeping with the recommendations of that review, the pilot projects are being reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

We are working with our partners. We are working with the hospitals, the LHINs and community lab providers. In cases where a collective decision is made to transition to a provincial community lab model, partners will work to ensure that that is seamless for patients.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity—seated in the Speaker's gallery today from the riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London are Helen Van Brenk, Katrina Kalita-Van Brenk, Lisa Van Brenk, Hunter Van Brenk, Kaysee Van Brenk and Finn Van Brenk. Unfortunately, Helen's husband, Rein, and son Brian aren't here.

As many of you know—you'll remember, on the first day back of the Legislature, we had those wonderful Honeycrisp apples. The Van Brenks have a great fruit farm. But there's another really good new apple out there right now. Rein shared it with me at the plowing match; it's called a Silken. You've got to try a Silken apple as well.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to introduce John and Donna Henning who, via Chicago and other ways, in terms of connecting, had lunch with Dave, which is a program that I do for charity. They bought the charity dinner. They were here to watch question period. John is a student of politics in the United States and is fascinated by your role, Speaker. I thought I'd let you know that he thinks you are a pretty fair-square-deal guy in dealing in the House.

I wanted to introduce John and Donna, and thank them for visiting us here at Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I wasn't about to rush that introduction.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SALMON SPECTACULAR FISHING DERBY

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I want to tell you, I think you're a fair guy, too, just to get the story right.

I rise here today to tell my fellow colleagues and friends of a very successful fishing derby that was held in my riding last month. More than 50,000 people passed through the Molson big top tent at the 23rd annual Salmon Spectacular fishing derby, held between August 27 and September 5 on the waters of Owen Sound and Colpoy's Bay. It's one of the largest and longest-running fishing derbies in North America.

This year, virtually every day was filled with special events packed with activities for the whole family thanks to the generosity of 170 event sponsors. There were 3,000 registered anglers and daily prizes for the top 10 chinook salmon and top five trout.

The derby is put on by the Sydenham Sportsmen's Association with the help of hundreds of volunteer members and volunteer sponsors. I would especially like to recognize the work of three co-chairs: Fred Gebhardt, John Ford and Bill Douglas.

The crowds keep getting bigger every year. This year, Team Murdoch served over 5,000 hungry friends at the giant fish fry. The festivities ended with \$150,000 in prizes given away to our best anglers.

All the money raised for the Salmon Spectacular goes towards fishing conservation projects, which include a volunteer-run fish hatchery at Weaver's Creek that rears rainbow trout, brown trout and chinook salmon.

I invite all of you to come up to Owen Sound in 2011 for a great time and to support an important community event. Here's a picture of a couple of us at it.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Last Friday evening, I was part of a gathering at the University of Toronto Native

Students' Association gardens with a number of constituents and supporters who were very concerned about the treatment of Chile's indigenous Mapuche people.

Today marks the 79th day of a hunger strike by 35 Mapuche prisoners in southern Chile. Most of them are chiefs and leaders of Chile's indigenous population, people protected under the International Labour Organization convention 169.

The Mapuche demands are clear: the right to a fair trial; an end to the application of military justice; an end to the use of both military and civil trials for the same offence; an end to the violations of ILO 169, which Chile signed in 2009; and an end to the violence and torture targeted at the indigenous Mapuche. These demands are not unreasonable. Citizens of democracies worldwide expect no less of their governments.

I urge all MPPs and citizens to voice their concern, to contact the ambassador of Chile at echileca@chile.ca and demand that President Piñera of Chile respect his country's ratification of ILO 169 and recognize the rights of the Mapuche people.

BIOREM

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I recently had the pleasure of announcing the McGuinty government's continuing support of innovative business in Guelph.

Biorem is a clean tech company that designs and manufactures biological systems that remove odours and contaminants from the air. Through the innovation demonstration fund, the McGuinty government is investing \$1.2 million to help Biorem develop new technologies that remove volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, from manufacturing or municipal air exhausts. Biorem will be using the funding to install an industrial scale demonstration VOC treatment system at Polycon Industries in Guelph. Polycon is seeking a more effective process for removing the VOCs produced during manufacturing from their plant's exhaust.

The biotechnology developed by Biorem produces as little as 5% of the greenhouse gas emissions of traditional solutions and lowers the plant's operating costs by more than 40%. Biorem estimates the global market for its biotechnology is more than \$1.5 billion and meeting this demand will generate 37 Ontario jobs over five years.

Last year, Biorem also received \$1.2 million in funding to develop biologic solutions for waste water treatment. I'm—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

KAREN GLEDHILL

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to commemorate the life of Community Living Ontario president Karen Gledhill, who passed away earlier this summer after a battle with breast cancer.

Karen began her volunteer work with Community Living Cambridge after the birth of her two sons. She later went on to serve as that board's president. As a

parent of a child with a disability, Karen understood the important role that families play in supporting their children and brought a parent's perspective and passion to the job.

In 2006, she joined Community Living Ontario as a volunteer regional director, and in this role she facilitated ways for local associations in the region to build stronger ties with each other. Karen went on to become the president of Community Living Ontario, running unchallenged in 2009. She was elected for a second term this past May, a sign that her leadership was endorsed by many.

Karen was a proud voice for social inclusion, human rights and dignity for those with intellectual disabilities. Karen was passionate, and she often spoke out against the harm and disruption that individuals with an intellectual disability experience as a result of striking workers picketing their homes. As you know, in May I tabled a private member's bill that would prevent picketing outside of supportive living residences.

Karen's family and Community Living were very lucky to have a person with Karen's spirit of volunteerism, perseverance and dedication in their lives. Thank you, Karen.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. David Ramsay: I'm very pleased to report to the House that Minister Gravelle and I, on September 10, officiated at an opening of a brand new gold mine in Matachewan, just west of Kirkland Lake. There are going to be 600 construction jobs over the next two years there, followed up with about 265 mining jobs for what was reported to be 15 years. Now, another five years of gold reserves have been discovered there.

This is incredible news for this area. It's going to mean economic benefits for Kirkland Lake and area, but probably as important, the Matachewan First Nation has a wonderful relationship with Northgate Minerals, whose mine this is, and are afforded, through an impact benefit agreement, an incredible opportunity for entrepreneurial activities, training and employment directly at the mine. Many of the First Nations were there, were employed on that day. That bodes very well for our area, and we're very pleased to see that.

1510

I was also very pleased to make an announcement on behalf of the northern Ontario heritage fund for an amount up to \$900,000 to the Matachewan First Nation for road improvements from the reserve to Highway 66 to facilitate all those economic activities that the Matachewan First Nation will be benefiting from.

This is such a win for the area. I'd like to thank the minister for his help with the project and his support and wish everybody well there. We're looking forward to that development.

CANADA 55+ GAMES

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise in the House to commend the remarkable job the city of Brockville did on behalf of all

Ontarians as host community for the 2010 Canada 55+ senior games from August 23 to 28.

This year marked the first time that the event, which began in 1996, had ever been held in Ontario. The games organizing committee put together an impressive bid to secure the games, and I have nothing but admiration for how enthusiastically the organizers, municipal councils, businesses and every citizen embraced the challenge.

But I'd like to take a moment to congratulate the medal winners from Leeds–Grenville and also a couple from Lanark county. In Brockville, the Brockville Magedoma hockey teams, with players from across my riding, won gold in the 60+ and also 65+ categories.

In swimming, medalists were Doris McEwan from Brockville, Casper Haupt from Brockville, Muriel Carlyle from Brockville, Allan Merpaw from Elizabethtown and Edward Bellam of Portland.

In track and field, the winners were Gerd Sollondz from Brockville in men's discus, 100 metres and shot put, and Dave Poth from Prescott in the 200-metre and 400-metre, long jump and 4x100-metre relay.

In golf, Harriette Peterson of Smiths Falls won a gold medal.

In badminton, Leo Thibault of Smiths Falls with Jack Powell from Perth won gold in doubles.

In tennis, Terry Kennedy of Brockville was a medallist in men's doubles with Jim Murphy of Merrickville and in mixed doubles with Edna Reilly of Athens.

In shuffleboard, the husband and wife duo of Mary and Arnold Mueller of Brockville also won a medal.

The approximately 1,500 athletes who competed at these games set an example to people of all ages about the value of keeping fit and taking part in healthy competition that challenges the mind, body and spirit.

THUNDER BAY MARATHON

Mr. Bill Mauro: Last Sunday, September 19, I had the pleasure of participating in the first Thunder Bay marathon, Miles with the Giant. The race was a loop course on what I think is a stunning track. There was a full marathon, a half, and a 5K run and walk; 835 participants took part in this inaugural event that began in the downtown north core, up Court Street to Boulevard Lake and into Centennial Park and back.

Our city has an incredible reputation for hosting world-class events in many different disciplines. Just this summer, the World Junior Baseball Championships were held in Thunder Bay, and it was such an incredible success that the organizers have been asked to consider applying and hosting it again.

The Miles with the Giant marathon was no different. Their tremendous organizing committee was led by president Barry Streib, who was supported by 200 incredible volunteers.

Congratulations to all participants, with a special nod to the women's overall marathon champion, Thunder Bay's own Nicki Wilberforce, who had a great time of three hours, two minutes, on what I considered to be a

very tough, challenging, hilly, but, in my opinion, a very fair and a very beautiful course.

As part of the marathon expo, Dick Beardsley provided an inspirational speech about his famous and extraordinary Boston Marathon duel 30 years ago with Alberto Salazar.

Thunder Bay has an incredibly active and robust running community. Miles with the Giant now has an opportunity to become one of the signature events on the running calendar, and I was pleased that our government was able to support this inaugural event with \$120,000 of support. Thank you to all those who contributed to an incredible day.

PETERBOROUGH LAKERS

Mr. Jeff Leal: For some, the number 13 is an unlucky number, but for the Peterborough Lakers lacrosse team the number 13 is a very lucky number. On Friday, September 17, the Peterborough Lakers won their 13th Mann Cup lacrosse championship. They defeated the New Westminster Salmonbellies in game six of the Mann Cup series with a score of 15-9. This victory was made more poignant because the Lakers dedicated their season to the memory of a great friend and a fan of lacrosse, Mr. Barry Larock. Barry was an assistant general manager with the Lakers and an employee with the city of Peterborough. This past June, Barry, at age 45, lost his battle with cancer.

The Peterborough Lakers, as a tribute to Barry, played not only to bring the Mann Cup home to Peterborough and the thousands of faithful fans who supported them, but they also played for Barry's love of the game.

Many don't know that the first indoor Mann Cup was played at Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto in October 1932. This is a sport with a long history in Canada and a strong tradition in my hometown of Peterborough.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Peterborough Senior A Lakers lacrosse team for their hard work and commitment to the sport of lacrosse, to their fans and the residents of Peterborough, and on winning the cup in the 2010 series.

We all look forward to next season's Lakers show.

TENNIS TOURNAMENT

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Between August 18 and 28, the 100th annual National Capital Tennis Association tournament was held at the Ottawa Tennis and Lawn Bowling Club in the great riding of Ottawa Centre. The Ottawa Tennis and Lawn Bowling Club itself is coming up, in 2011, on 130 years in our community, and I look forward to celebrating that with them next year.

It is fitting that NCTA would choose this club to hold the centennial championship matches for Ottawa's tennis players. The first city championships were played at the Ottawa Tennis and Lawn Bowling Club in 1910, organized by the National Capital Tennis Association. Awarded then were the Sir Percy Lake Trophy for men's

singles, as well as the Dr. F.C. Hanna and Birks trophies for men's doubles.

This year, the city champions were Rachel Cruikshank in ladies' singles and Galin Nizortchev in men's singles. Ladies' doubles was taken by Ms. Cruikshank and partner Elaine Douglas-Miron, and men's doubles was taken by Mr. Nizortchev and partner Matt Sherman.

The National Capital Tennis Association has 25 member clubs around the Ottawa area, from Manotick to Carleton University, Almonte to Orléans.

Congratulations to the champions, the NCTA board—especially president Sean Sweeney—OTLBC president Ron Stein, and all the staff and members from the various clubs who helped with the tournament.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated September 28, 2010, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ENHANCEMENT OF THE ONTARIO ENERGY AND PROPERTY TAX CREDIT FOR SENIORS AND ONTARIO FAMILIES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DU CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT DE L'ONTARIO POUR LES COÛTS D'ÉNERGIE ET LES IMPÔTS FONCIERS À L'INTENTION DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES ET DES FAMILLES DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt de l'Ontario pour les coûts d'énergie et les impôts fonciers et apporter des modifications corrélatives.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ENERGY AND PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I am pleased to stand before the House today for the introduction of the Enhancement of the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit for Seniors and Ontario Families Act, 2010.

In the 2010 Ontario budget, we announced our intention to convert the Ontario property tax credit into the Ontario energy and property tax credit. The proposed legislation not only fulfills that commitment but also enhances our support for seniors and Ontario families.

First of all, our proposed energy and property tax credit would include an increase of \$525 million compared to the 2009 property tax credit. This means we would deliver more than \$1.3 billion in annual support to 2.8 million low- and middle-income Ontarians.

The bill also increases the reduction thresholds for seniors, many of whom live on fixed incomes, so that 50,000 new senior families and singles will now be eligible for the credit. In total, 740,000 senior families and singles would benefit from these enhancements and receive, on average, an additional \$93 each year.

1520

As we all know, seniors have worked hard and helped build the province that we enjoy today. With this proposed tax credit, we are making it a little easier for them by putting money back into their pockets to help manage their home energy costs and property taxes.

To target relief to those who need it the most, the proposed energy and property tax credit will be income-tested. Ontarians who own or rent a home would be able to receive up to \$900 in tax relief, with seniors able to claim up to \$1,025 in tax relief. Ontarians who do not pay property tax or rent, but still pay for home energy—those who live on a reserve or in a long-term-care facility—would still be eligible for tax relief through the energy component of the proposed credit. Ontarians would be able to apply for the Ontario energy and property tax credit starting with their 2010 income tax returns.

Going forward, the tax credit would be paid quarterly, like the new Ontario sales tax credit. This means that Ontarians will have access to the money when they need it and not have to wait until the end of the taxation year to apply to get it back.

The proposed tax credit is part of the five-year Open Ontario plan, which supports job creation and enhances the programs and services that Ontarians value, including education, health care and skills training. It also supports our budget commitments to help Ontarians with their home energy costs and property taxes.

This credit builds on the tax cuts that came into effect in January, which have lowered taxes for 93% of Ontario income tax payers. It is also part of a package of tax credits we have recently introduced, including the

proposed children's activity tax credit, which would help families keep their kids healthy and active; and the new northern Ontario energy credit, which helps northerners with their energy costs.

The Enhancement of the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit for Seniors and Ontario Families Act, 2010, would provide 2.8 million Ontarians with more than \$1.3 billion to help pay for their household expenses. That's why I ask for the support of the House in passing this act.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Finance's statement on the introduction of his new bill, which is an act to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit for seniors. As we know, that was in the Ontario budget last March. I'm a little surprised they didn't just include this in the budget bill in the spring, although it's fairly obvious why. As we get closer to an election, with about a year to go, it seems like every bill we see now is a tax credit. They figure they can get more political bang for the buck by having these individual bills for individual tax credits. It's interesting that they have taken on this new strategy with just a year to go to an election.

We go back a few years. We look at what has taken place. This government has taken so much from Ontario families. Look at the first budget this government brought into effect. What did they do? They cancelled the seniors' property tax credit before it was able to take effect. That was the first year, 2003. Seniors would have had seven years of tax credits—which they cancelled—if they hadn't done away with that. In their first budget, they cancelled the seniors' property tax credit. They increased corporate taxes by some 27%, from the planned reduction down to an 11% tax rate up to 14%. They cancelled the small business tax reductions. They added all kinds of new taxes.

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: Well, they cancelled in the north. Funny how they're just bringing back some tax relief for the north through the energy credit. But in their first budget they did away with the reduced tax zone for all of northern Ontario that Ernie Eves had brought into effect. Then, having cancelled all these tax reductions in their first budget and subsequent budgets, they started bringing in big tax increases. So in 2004 we had the health tax, which was just a huge tax on Ontario families. Over \$15 billion has now been collected through the health tax.

More recently, of course, we've had the HST come into effect July 1. That's going to be an additional 8% that all families are paying on electricity, on heating oil, on gas for their car and on many, many other things. The government brought in the new eco tax, which I have to say I've certainly heard from lots of constituents in my riding about. Now they've backtracked on that one, and they've said they've taken, I think, a 90-day reprieve on that one. They'll bring it back in some way that likely the taxpayers won't see, it would be my guess.

On the energy file, everybody needs tax relief because we've seen so many increases, and I'm sure all MPPs are

hearing from people in their riding: the HST, as I mentioned, plus 8%; the recent Ontario Energy Board 10% increase; the green tax for programs, some \$50 million added onto the bill; the recent implementation of the smart meters. People are paying for the cost of the smart meters, but then we're also hearing from all kinds of constituents around the riding that you get the smart meter put in, it's not even turned on and suddenly the next month your hydro bill goes up significantly. That's a story we're hearing across the province, and that's before the time-of-use part of the hydro bill gets turned on, where you're going to be paying greatly higher rates during the day and the only way you will be able to save money is if you wash your clothes on Saturday or in the middle of the night.

So we've seen this long list of tax increases and burden to Ontario families and the cancellation of tax reductions at the very beginning of this government's time, and now all of a sudden, with a year to go to an election, it seems like every separate bill is a tax credit. Certainly, this bill was just introduced, and we will be looking at the bill. We did have a property tax credit back in 2003 that was in effect from the past PC government, so we're certainly in favour of reducing the tax burden that has been so greatly increased by the government. So we will certainly be looking at it and considering it. Any tax relief at this point is something that families absolutely need at this time in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, it's very clear somebody is polling. When I go door-to-door in my riding and talk to people, I have to say there's no question that seniors feel hard hit; they feel hard hit by property taxes, and they feel hard hit by their electricity bills. When I saw this bill coming forward, I thought, "Yes, it's that time." I can feel the clock ticking towards October 2011. Someone, in their plan, has realized they have to have another piece that they can put in the campaign literature.

There's no question that seniors are feeling the burden from downloading. Even George Smitherman, a former Deputy Premier who used to reside in this chamber, is talking about \$100 million from the province to balance out the books for the city of Toronto in his own fiscal plan. Whether the tender mercy will be there or not, I don't know. We will see. But the burden on the city of Toronto and other municipalities across this province is substantial. They feel it. When you poll, when you talk to citizens, you can see that seniors need this kind of relief. But I want to say that we in the NDP—and my guess is members right across the spectrum in this House—have heard from families and seniors about their skyrocketing hydro bills. People see their bills rise substantially even when they take measures to try to control their energy use.

What is driving these costs are policies that take the least efficient and effective way of dealing with our hydro needs in this province.

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Every one of this government's decisions about hydro adds nickels and dimes to people's hydro bills—a

decision to go forward with another nuclear refurbishment; a decision to build the transmission lines that are necessary for those refurbished nuclear power plants; the decision to put in smart meters at a cost that is extraordinary; a decision to let private electricity companies make even more money out of the people in this province; the decision to let gas utilities take even more profit out of this province—and means that people's standard of living is under siege. They feel it. This bill acknowledges that and acknowledges that there are substantial policy failures, decisions about the future of this province that are hurting people and that have to be ameliorated by the government in order to salvage something in time for the next election.

When you take all of those decisions about electricity investment and then you add on top of it the underwriting of a corporate tax cut with the HST added onto people's expenses, you get a very bad mix that makes it difficult for people to hold together their household finances.

I don't disagree that Ontario seniors need a break, but I would say to you that all Ontarians need a break on their hydro bills from the policies that this government has been pursuing.

This plan won't provide immediate response or help for seniors. It leaves them on the hook for hydro bills that are shooting up. McGuinty's proposal leaves out other families who are struggling to make ends meet.

At \$500 million, a cancellation of the HST on hydro bills would help families in this province tremendously. That's the direction that this government has to go in. Our proposal, the NDP proposal, to take the HST off hydro bills saves the average family with two or more children about \$135 a year. They need that; they need that kind of relief.

Some quotes from people—I see my time is short, but just one or two quotes from people who have written in:

"It is totally unfair to be hit with higher prices per kilowatt hour as well as the HST tax on our hydro bills.

"Chuck and Clara Zizzo."

"I just want to voice my opinion on the hydro increase and the HST. First off, I am one of the unemployed in Hamilton, and this could not have come at a worse time. We are struggling to make ends meet.

"Susan Surowaniec, Hamilton."

PETITIONS

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and I want to thank Amy Preston from my riding for providing it to me.

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a

well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians affected with MS."

I agree with this petition. I will affix my signature and send it to the table with Nick.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of constituents from my riding, in particular Ron Baker, who is a grandson of a home child. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas, due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to thank the council of the town of New Tecumseth for sending me these petitions.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of the province of Ontario has entered into an agreement with the government of Canada to implement the harmonized goods and services tax; and

"Whereas the majority of Ontario taxpayers are opposed to the implementation of this tax; and

"Whereas the HST will add 8% to many goods and services where currently only the 5% GST is charged and will result in increased costs for all Ontarians and may create financial hardship for lower-income families and individuals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government rescind its decision to implement the HST in Ontario."

I certainly will sign that petition.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition here entitled "Save Ontario's Independent School Bus Operators." It's a lengthy petition; I will not read it all. But the school bus operators are saying:

"Whereas the outcomes of the RFP pilot projects have proven that local bus operators will lose their routes in an RFP process based on price first and quality second; and

"Whereas the experience in other jurisdictions has proven that, while there may be short-term cost savings to an RFP process, in the long run the process reduces competition and costs eventually go up...;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the undersigned Ontario parents, students, community leaders, education professionals and business owners call on the Ontario government to address the concerns of the Independent School Bus Operators Association (ISBOA), abandon the RFP process, and adopt a process that ensures small and medium-sized school bus companies continue to be able to do business in" this province.

I agree with the petition and will hand it to page Noor for the table.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to Brigid.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's still about HST. It's from people from Chatsworth, Leith, and even from Saugeen First Nation.

"Whereas the residents of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I've signed this and I will give it to Megan.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Khalil Ramal: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas violent crime and gangs have been a problem in our communities; children require safe schools and safe streets in order to thrive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To continue with their support of the gangs and guns program;

"To continue to recognize the importance of a strong and educated police force;

"To continue to support rehabilitation programs;

"To continue to keep education as a top priority; and

"To continue to make our streets and schools safe places to be."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Audrey.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of the province of Ontario has entered into an agreement with the government of Canada to implement the harmonized goods and services tax; and

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"Whereas the majority of Ontario taxpayers are opposed to the implementation of this tax; and

"Whereas the HST will add 8% to many goods and services where currently only the 5% GST is charged and will result in increased costs for all Ontarians and may create financial hardship for lower-income families and individuals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government rescind its decision to implement the HST in Ontario."

I want to thank the council of the town of New Tecumseth for sending this petition to me.

CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition here for the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it's for the funding and approval for CCSVI diagnosis and treatments.

"Whereas, even though health care institutions in Ontario have the equipment and expertise, those MS patients who have been diagnosed with blocked veins in their neck (CCSVI) cannot receive the necessary treatment in Ontario; and

"Whereas many of the MS patients with CCSVI, at great personal expense, have had to seek treatment in other countries such as India, Poland, Bulgaria, Italy and the US, the provincial government still has not authorized the procedure, which is angioplasty, an already approved procedure since the early 1980s; and

"Whereas not all people diagnosed with MS have been found to have CCSVI, and not all people who have CCSVI will have been diagnosed with MS, CCSVI treatment should be authorized and treated on its own merits, regardless of any MS issues; and

"Whereas numerous testimonials of exceptional post-treatment improvements in the quality of life for patients, accompanied by detailed presentations by vascular surgeons" to the Ontario government, the Ontario government still has not yet approved CCSVI treatment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Health, must immediately approve and fund all diagnosing and treatment of CCSVI by qualified Ontario health institutions."

I agree with this petition and will sign my name to it and give it to Brigid for the table.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

"Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

"Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 70;

"Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment in 2007 to provide a 2% base funding increase to agencies providing developmental services every year up to 2010-11;

"Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

"Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to service providers in the developmental services sector."

I have affixed my signature as I am in complete agreement, and give it to page Nick.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: As you know, a lot of people are upset with the harmonized sales tax, and I have another petition from people in my area. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the residents of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships ... and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I've signed this and will give it to Christopher.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

"Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

"Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 70;

"Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment in 2007 to provide a 2% base funding increase to agencies providing developmental services every year up to 2010-11;

"Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

"Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to service providers in the developmental services sector."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's is a petition from the good people of Alliston and the town of New Tecumseth.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of the province of Ontario has entered into an agreement with the government of Canada to implement the harmonized goods and services tax; and

"Whereas the majority of Ontario taxpayers are opposed to the implementation of this tax; and

"Whereas the HST will add 8% to many goods and services where currently only the 5% GST is charged and will result in increased costs for all Ontarians and may create financial hardship for lower-income families and individuals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government rescind its decision to implement the HST in Ontario."

I will sign that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Brue-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas the residents of Ontario feel that this government has let them down on many different things, especially in high taxes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government immediately resign and call an election."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I have a sneaking suspicion that that was a petition that has not been approved. Did it have a stamp from the table?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would remind the honourable member that the standing orders are very clear that petitions to be presented in this Legislature must be first vetted by the table and have the seal of approval on them, and I would just remind the honourable member that subsequent petitions presented in this chamber need to be approved by the table.

The time for petitions has ended. Orders of the day.

OPPOSITION DAY

SMART METERS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the McGuinty govern-

ment to suspend the smart meter time-of-use program until billing problems are fixed and Ontario families are given the option of whether to participate in the time-of-use program. That's addressed to the Minister of Energy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Yakabuski has moved opposition day number 1. Debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The motion just read by the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is an important step to help Ontario families who are struggling to manage their household budgets in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. I want to thank our energy critic, the Ontario PC House leader and member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for bringing this important matter forward. I know he will be debating this later on.

As you know, families across this province are leaving their hydro bill on the kitchen table for days and days on end—

Mr. Jim Wilson: They're afraid to open it.

Mr. Tim Hudak: They're afraid to open it up, as my colleague from Simcoe-Grey says, because they know the bill is only heading in one direction, and that is way up. When they bring this forward to the Premier of the province, what kind of advice does he have for them? Well, in an extraordinary Marie Antoinette moment, he says, "Let them do their laundry on Saturday"—a shocking headline in the Ottawa Citizen a couple of days ago about Premier McGuinty declaring Saturday to be laundry day for the people in the province of Ontario.

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Ontario families are weary of Premier Dad's experiments and his social engineering, which are driving their hydro bills through the roof. So the Ontario PC caucus has tabled this motion to stand against the out-of-touch Premier and his Liberal government and stand with the senior citizen who can't abide by Premier McGuinty's decree that she should get up and do her laundry at 2 in the morning. We're standing with the shift worker who can't adjust his or her schedule to fit in with Dalton McGuinty's vision of what an ideal household should look like. And we stand with that family with young kids who can't have them all up and showered and ready for school by 6 a.m. in order to beat the clock of Dalton McGuinty's smart meter, as this Premier wants them to do.

We take a very different approach. Where Dalton McGuinty wants to beat everyone over the head with sticks and higher costs, we believe in carrots to incent people to adapt to prices in the marketplace. We believe in incentives; Premier McGuinty believes in higher prices. Dalton McGuinty believes in telling Ontario families what to do; the Ontario PCs believe in giving Ontario families a fair choice. It's a choice between using time of use or not, depending on the family's preferences, senior citizens who are home, shift workers, the reality of families with young kids across the province—a reality that, sadly, Dalton McGuinty has lost touch with after seven years in office.

Here's what my colleague the energy critic's proposal in the motion seeks to do. Our proposal is to halt the

program, fix the problems that Premier McGuinty was warned about and then offer a real choice of regulated rates for Ontario families who are unable to live in Premier McGuinty's ideal home. Let us not forget that these smart meter tax machines were originally supposed to save all of us money. Premier McGuinty twice said—in April 2004 and in May 2009—that his smart meter experiment would lead to lower energy bills. His former lieutenant George Smitherman, when he was energy minister, said in February 2009 that hydro bills would only go up about 1% per year. We now know that those commitments, those promises, would in no way resemble the reality of hydro bills that would come down the road in the fall of 2010.

Eventually, the truth did come out. In January, a spokesperson from the Ministry of Energy pulled the lid off of the social experiment when she said that smart meters are more about creating awareness of energy use rather than helping people save money. That is why we need real choice, choice between a time-of-use rate that would actually give incentives to use power at off-peak times or a choice of a regulated rate, depending on what will work for that individual family. It's the same kind of choice that's going to be offered in British Columbia, which is not making time of use mandatory, the same kind of choice that exists in California, Florida, New York, Illinois and other jurisdictions that have brought in time-of-use pricing. But they understand, unlike Dalton McGuinty, that families need a choice, so time of use is not mandatory. We believe we should do the exact same thing here in the province of Ontario and give families that choice.

As you know, other jurisdictions like Victoria in Australia took the time to fix installation issues to get it right and to protect consumers, to encourage conservation and stand up for low-income families who were hit hard by this kind of initiative. These are jurisdictions that have found ways to balance hydro system upgrades with conservation goals and the ability of families to balance their own budgets. But not here in Ontario. Here, the Premier's only fix is to have us do our laundry during the weekend or in the middle of the night.

I should say that it's not only the Ontario PC caucus that is saying that there is an issue with smart meters, which Dalton McGuinty has turned into nothing more than tax machines on families across this province; the McGuinty government was warned that the smart meters were broken, but the Premier has plunged ahead with his expensive experiments anyway. Twenty-one energy distributors—some of the biggest in the province, as a matter of fact, including Hydro One—warned the Premier. They raised the flag that the rush to make time of use mandatory by June 2011 wouldn't give them time to fix all of the problems with the meters, that they couldn't fix bugs in the software to run them and the inaccurately high bills that they would produce as a result. Even Premier McGuinty's Ontario Energy Board acknowledged in its own letter that “a number of distributors expressed the view that the setting of manda-

tory TOU dates is premature and inappropriate at this time....”

The warning signs over the extra costs are already out there as well. According to a recent article in the *Financial Post*, the cost of getting smart meters up and running in Ontario could reach \$10.3 billion when all is said and done—\$10.3 billion on the backs of retirees and families in the province through higher hydro bills.

So what we are asking is very straightforward. It is very clear; it is fair; it is the right thing to do. Experts warned that rushing into mandatory smart meters would produce tax machines and errors and a pricing system that can be fraught with dangers and unintended consequences. We saw the warning signs, we've heard the damage and we've talked to families right across this province, but sadly, that has not pierced Premier McGuinty's bubble here at Queen's Park.

The Ontario PC caucus is calling on the Premier to do the right thing: to pause in the smart meter initiative, to fix the problems, to get it right and to make sure that time-of-use rates actually encourage conservation, not the tax machines that he's turned these things into.

Secondly, for the sake of families across the province who are struggling to make ends meet, for families who cannot adapt their lifestyle to Dalton McGuinty's ideal home, to give them a fair choice: to choose between time of use or a flat rate depending on their individual circumstances, their town, their city, the size of their family. It only makes sense. Those who can conserve will, but those who can't make ends meet need a chance to catch up. They need a break, and we know that if they spend the money in the local economy, they'll help to create jobs again.

I do hope that all members of the assembly will support this motion standing in the name of our energy critic to halt the program, to fix it and give a fair and reasonable choice to Ontario families: whether they want to participate in this program or not. Why won't you give them that choice, Premier?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm really pleased to have this opportunity to speak to this motion and pleased that the opposition has brought it forward. Let me tell you why: because it quite simply demonstrates that when it comes to energy issues, the Leader of the Opposition and the Tory party are just as short-sighted, just as confused and just as lacking in competence today as they were seven years ago, when they brought Ontario's energy system to a virtual state of collapse. The Leader of the Opposition didn't have it then and he doesn't have it now.

Ontarians remember those days. They remember what we call the Dark Ages in energy in the province of Ontario: the days of unreliable electricity powered by dirty coal; the days of increasing demand for power and decreasing supply; the days when eight years of Tory neglect left our energy system in absolute shambles. No, the Dark Ages in energy in Ontario weren't 1,300 years ago, they were seven years ago.

Needless to say, Ontario's weak, unreliable, dirty and outdated energy system in those days was in serious need of an upgrade. At the distribution level, the metering technology was ancient. Some of those meters had not been changed since our neighbourhoods throughout the province were built. They've been in place for 40 to 60 years, some even older. That was not an uncommon situation. Local distribution companies would find out about damage and power outages only when a customer called them about it. The people of Ontario deserve a modern, reliable, cost-effective electricity system, not energy infrastructure that belongs, frankly, more on a Leave It to Beaver set than it does on the side of your house today.

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We've made great strides since 2003 in stabilizing the system and working toward that goal. We're investing in new, cleaner supply and in updating our energy infrastructure, from our meters to our nuclear plants. We've made investments to support upgrades of over 5,000 kilometres of transmission and distribution lines which bring clean, reliable electricity to our homes and businesses.

We're modernizing our infrastructure that rests closest to home: the metering system. We're modernizing it because we need it. They're old. The Tory resolution and the Tories' position is to replace our old, outdated meters with old, outdated meters and technology. That's just plain foolish. Why would we not want to move forward with modernizing our energy infrastructure system? Why would we not want homeowners and businesses across our province to have modern energy technology—modern, updated, smart technology that's going to lead to much better advantages in our electricity system and better advantages for those consumers as well? An efficient smart-metering system will generate real benefits for Ontarians in the long run and will provide tangible results for Ontarians in the short term as well.

Today, over 4.1 million smart meters are in place to help make our system more efficient and effective. The rollout of smart meters in this province is going forward on time and on budget, and that's something we're very, very pleased to be able to say.

Smart meters mean better customer service. They're helping electricity distributors pinpoint and respond more quickly to damage and power outages. They're providing Ontarians with more precise readings of energy consumption, doing away with old estimates and on-site measuring, and doing away with the days when people had to knock on your door and go down into your basement to look at your meters.

It's time to move into modern times, modern ages. The technology is there to help Ontario families work together to build a better energy future in this province. The Tories don't want to go to those days. They live in fear of modernizing our infrastructure; they live in fear of moving forward with a modern energy system. They want to take us back. Ontario residents don't want to go backwards. They want to keep Ontario in front. They want us to keep moving ahead.

Smart meters are giving consumers the information they need to make the choices that they want to make to manage their energy usage. By enabling time-of-use pricing, smart meters will encourage consumers to shift their usage away from when the economic and environmental costs of providing electricity are at their highest. We encourage consumers to shift usage from peak hours so we can minimize or avoid costly investments in new generation and new transmission. It's just the smart way to run our system. It's really just the most intelligent way to move forward, working arm in arm with the people of this province to ensure that they have a modernized meter system, a modernized energy system that works much better than the old technology we had before.

Smart meters are also a key asset in developing a smart electricity grid in Ontario, one that can more readily bring new renewable energy online. Together, smart meters and time-of-use pricing deliver benefits for individual consumers and for the provincial electricity system as a whole. By the summer of 2011, our goal is to have 3.6 million customers on time-of-use pricing.

Ontario has become a global leader in modernizing our energy infrastructure, and as such, we have indeed received international recognition. We've had representatives from countries around the world—from BC Hydro here in Canada, from Australia, Japan, Russia—who have come over to look at how we are the best in the world as we roll this out. But we're not the only ones that are engaged in this, nor are those countries that have come to visit us. The United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Ireland, other countries—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Name them. Don't just say "other countries."

Hon. Brad Duguid: All kinds of countries around the world are getting involved in this initiative because, pure and simple, it's the modernization of our energy infrastructure.

Let's look to the United Kingdom, where the new Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron said this about smart meters: "In energy and electricity terms, this is like going from analog television ... to digital television where you have an enormous amount of choice and interactivity."

Prime Minister Cameron's government likewise put out a prospectus that set an ambitious goal, and it noted, "The government is committed to every home in Great Britain having smart energy meters, empowering people to manage their energy consumption and reduce their carbon emissions.... The rollout of smart meters will play an important role in Great Britain's transition to a low-carbon economy, and help us meet some of the long-term challenges we face in ensuring an affordable, secure and sustainable energy" supply. It's good to see that there are still some progressive—and I stress the word "progressive"—conservative governments in the world, if not here in this province.

In the United States, President Barack Obama has likewise expressed the need for grid modernization using smart meters as the way to do it, and he spoke of the

opposition in his country to this by saying, "It's a debate between looking backwards and looking forward; between those who are ready to seize the future and those who are afraid of the future.... And we refuse to believe that our politics are too broken to make the energy future we dream of a reality."

President Obama was right. It is a debate between moving backwards and moving forwards. It's a debate between those who are afraid of the future, like our friends across the aisle, the Tories; afraid to move forward to modernize our energy system; afraid to make the decisions that we need to make to build a strong, reliable, clean energy system. They want to go backwards. They want to go back to where we were in the Dark Ages of energy in this province. They want to go back to where we were seven years ago, when we had a weak, unreliable, dirty system relying on dirty coal and impacting our health and impacting the cleanliness of our air.

We're not going to go back there. Ontarians have worked too hard, we've come too far, we've done too much together to turn our backs on that brighter, that stronger future now. If we work together, we will continue to be a leader around the world, one of the best—we're out ahead of the rest of the world and we're darned determined to ensure that Ontarians remain there. I thank you for the time to be able to participate in the debate and I look forward to hearing what others have to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I've got to say, in response to what I just heard from the Minister of Energy, that this underscores a theme that has run through this chamber from the moment I walked in here in November 2007, and that is, if we don't do it in the Liberal way, we're either doing it wrong or we're against it. If you bothered, sir, to read the motion that we're debating today, what you'd find is that we're not against smart meters at all. What it says is we want to freeze the installation of smart meters until such time as they are proven to work. And we've heard plenty of admission from that side of the House—from the government side of the House—on the fact that they don't work at this point. So don't characterize the Progressive Conservative Party as being anything but for the people, the people who are going to have to pay the price of machines that, as of this point, are indeed nothing more than tax generation machines.

The main message that we get from the McGuinty Liberal government on an ongoing basis is that we have to make sacrifices these days. That's why we have these great big deficits that you people are racking up. We have to make sacrifices.

If you've ever been a dad, and most of the males in this chamber have been dads—we understand sacrifice. We call the Premier "Premier Dad" as a nickname for a reason: because he asks for us to see the world in that way. We don't see the world in that way. Sacrifice is a legitimate thing to do, but there's no way that this side of the House is going to sacrifice on the basis of how money

is being managed on behalf of the citizens of Ontario by that party.

The sub-message: "If you don't support our legislation, you're somehow or other anti-Ontario." That is patently untrue. I would cite by way of example a couple of things: the Green Energy Act, which we debated last year. I could say an awful lot about the Green Energy Act, but I have limited time. The Green Energy Act: Either I voted for it or I was somehow against green energy. Not true. The pesticides act a couple of years ago: I voted against that act, but I'm not against the protection of our children, and that's what I was told at the time I was by voting against it.

If I go on, the Water Opportunities Act, which has just gone to committee after second reading: I'm against that as well, but not because I'm against clean water. I'm against legislation that's just brought in by the Liberal government of the day, and that's the difference between the way we are characterized on this side and the way you present what you present as "Our way or the highway." My message is quite a different message. My message is: If it looks like manure and it smells like manure, it's either Liberal rhetoric or it's manure.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would ask you to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I withdraw.

The point we're trying—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Yes, you saw the program too.

The point we're trying to make is that Ontario families, as the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party pointed out in his opening remarks, are afraid to open hydro bills.

I want to read into the record—I have several of them; many of them, indeed—but one letter that I got from a Thornhill resident on this subject. I quote from Ralph:

"As yet I don't have a smart meter but my best guess is that it will add 20% as we are in our mid-seventies and not inclined to get up at 2 a.m. to do the laundry or dishes and also not inclined to buy new clothes and dish washers with delayed startup timers when our current appliances work just fine. The point of this note is to advise that today PowerStream sent us a letter increasing the monthly instalment from \$194 (which they set themselves from historic data) to \$378 per month for the next six months. Upon calling I found some was catch-up but a significant portion was the inclusion of the HST and the 12.9% rate increase."

That is about smart meters and the other things that you've been piling on. You've got to understand why we're asking for a freeze, and you've got to understand why we're asking for a choice, and you've got to understand—because you read the newspapers as well as we do—that that is no more than any citizen of the province of Ontario wants us to call for right now.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to speak to this motion brought by the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on the smart meter time-of-use billing.

I've reflected on the thinking behind this motion and indeed the thinking behind the whole Tory position on how to manage Ontario's energy needs. As far as I can figure out, what we've got here is a four-point PC energy plan. Point number one is to do nothing about the situation and just run our energy system into the ground. Point two is to burn coal and have a whole lot of dirty, unhealthy air here in the province and all of the nasty things and health issues that that gives rise to. The third point in their plan seems to be to ignore all forms of renewable energy, and that flies in the face of thinking throughout the world. And I suppose the fourth point of their plan is merely just to stand over there and hoot and howl and blame Liberals.

But what is the reality of the member's thinking behind his motion? Let me just put something into the record here. I have before me a document entitled Building Ontario's New Foundations: Energy for the Future. The date of that document is February 2006. It's the energy platform for the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party. I note that on page 6 of that document, in the introduction, they lay out three issues that they refer to, and they say, "We have to," and they lay out, "We have to do three things." Interestingly, the second thing is, "We have to invest in demand management—to shift peaks in consumption to off-hours." That's exactly what we're doing here and that's exactly what the member opposite's motion is attacking now. So I ask myself: What is really going on in policy circles with the official opposition?

However, there are other thoughtful people and thoughtful public officials who have thought deeply about this subject. Let me just start off with a quote from Gordon Miller, who is Ontario's Environmental Commissioner. He, of course, has developed a reputation for calling things as he sees them. What did he say in a September 16, 2010, blog post with respect to the smart meter policy of this government? "I am going to start off by congratulating Premier McGuinty...." Number two, he says, "I am confident that as we gain experience with" time-of-use "prices, we can find the optimum spread between peak and off-peak prices."

This initiative that we've introduced on the time-of-use pricing is in some ways something that we're working through. It requires some fine-tuning, and as the Premier has said, we are going to see that this time-of-use pricing works.

Let me just parse the actual motion that the member opposite has brought. It reads as follows: "Mr. Yaka-buski—That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the McGuinty government to suspend the smart meter time-of-use program until billing problems are fixed and Ontario families are given the option of whether to participate in the time-of-use program."

It's very interesting that they do see the need for, the strategy behind and the intent behind this, because the motion is supportive of the program.

What do some other folks have to say about this time-of-use-billing smart meter? Let me quote from the CEO of Newmarket Hydro. I think that's up there in the North York area. A member opposite—

Interjection.

Mr. David Zimmer: What does he say? "The introduction of smart meters in Newmarket builds the foundation for new advances in the way we use electricity. The old saying 'you can only manage what you can measure' has never been more apt. The introduction of time-of-use pricing in Newmarket over the past 18 months has seen consumers begin to shift consumption from weekdays to weekends, reducing the strain on the electricity system and the impacts of electricity generation on the environment with no disruption in lifestyle."

What do they say in Aurora, Barrie, Markham and Vaughan? Brian Bentz, who's the president and CEO of PowerStream, which services that area, says: "Ontario is seen as a world leader in smart meter implementation. Visits to PowerStream's head office from energy officials representing other markets, seeking our expertise as they design their own smart meter programs, is a testament to our province's leadership in this area. PowerStream continues to be a strong supporter and advocate of the provincial government's smart meter initiative and recognizes it as being a key component to further developing Ontario's conservation and demand" system.

I have a very interesting quote here from a prominent Tory—in fact, a prominent Tory Prime Minister, one David Cameron in the UK. He said, back on January 16, 2010, "The government"—that is, the UK Tory government—"is committed to every home in Great Britain having smart energy meters, empowering people to manage their energy consumption and reduce their carbon emissions."

The Prime Minister of Ireland, Brian Cowen, on June 14, 2010: "Here in Ireland, we believe that smart grids have the potential to benefit a variety of players in the industry," effectively "managing household consumption more effectively. The government target is to put 21,000 smart meters in Irish homes this year alone."

I have similarly supportive quotes from the Minister for Climate Change in Australia and from the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment in New Zealand.

The point of my introducing those quotes from other countries and other jurisdictions, and the quotes from the heads of Newmarket electricity and Vaughan, King, Aurora and so on, is to point out that other jurisdictions have huge challenges managing the same issues that we do—England, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand—and that local municipalities like Newmarket, Aurora, Vaughan, King, Markham and so on have serious local challenges as well as national challenges. We, of course, here in Ontario have serious provincial challenges to manage our electricity delivery system.

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The point is that all serious policy thinkers recognize the value in smart meter time-of-use billing. And for the

member opposite, in his motion, to attack this initiative that all jurisdictions, all serious policy thinkers, all serious politicians support is in many ways disingenuous. I say it's disingenuous when I reflect back on the 2006 Ontario Progressive Conservative energy platform policy, Energy for the Future, because what they were saying to the people of Ontario then was, "If you elect us in 2007, one of the first things we're going to tackle, one of the first things we're going to do is invest in demand management to shift peaks in consumption to off-hours." This is exactly what the Minister of Energy is doing. You should be supportive of this initiative.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It was interesting listening to the members of the Ostrich Party across the way. I call them the Ostrich Party clearly because they have their heads buried somewhere.

Here is a—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask you to refer to the party by name and member.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Yes.

Anyway, here is a sensible approach taken by the official opposition to fix a problem that is evident to us all. I am absolutely confident that every member in the Liberal benches has heard the same complaints that we have in our constituency offices, where people's bills are unexpectedly and without justification doubling and tripling at the oddest—and without justification. What does this Liberal Party do when faced with a problem? Well, they make it into a political game, a partisan game, instead of actually fixing or even addressing the problem.

I think it's clear in my estimation, in my view as a electrician, that the Liberals are much like electricity: not only are they shocking in their approach to politics, but they also take the path of least resistance all the time. They never will actually do any work if there's another route where they don't have to do anything. That's what they're doing on this opposition day: They're choosing to abandon the people of Ontario. Instead of looking at the faults and the failings that are with this program and helping people, they sit on their seats and they create political, partisan footballs out of really important subjects.

I'll just give you a couple of indications. These are calls that I've received at my office. Here is Linda Stewart from Smiths Falls. She operates a business in Smiths Falls. Her hydro bill has gone up last month to \$1,200. Her delivery charge is \$479, the regulatory charges are another \$121, the debt retirement charge another \$112, and HST of \$237, for a total of \$2,266. We all understand: Here, her bill, her energy charge is only half of what she has to pay. That's Linda Stewart from Smiths Falls.

We also have Karen Sudds, who has contacted my office, who lives in Centreville in Lennox and Addington. The hydro usage last month on her bill was pretty constant. It was \$59, but her total bill for Ontario Hydro was \$160; so, \$59 for energy and \$160 in total costs. We hear these, on and on and on.

Sue and Elmer Reid from Lanark have seen their hydro bills double this year. They are constantly and vigilantly doing everything possible to save energy at their home, and it has more than doubled.

Krista Bergwerff from Carleton Place: Her last bill for hydro usage was up to \$335 for her residence, but on top of that, the delivery charge of \$233, plus, of course, the Liberals' favourite tax grab this year, the HST, and ended up with a total of \$669 for a residential home.

These are all people who are on the smart meter program, on the time-of-use program. There are problems, but this Liberal government chooses to involve themselves with spin and rhetoric, and instead of the Minister of Energy directing his administration to fix this problem, he chooses to be asleep at the switch and take the path of least resistance once more.

We all know that when you purchase something, even if you purchase a Cadillac or a Mercedes-Benz, sometimes you get a lemon. Well, Ontario has got a lemon with this Liberal Party, and we've got a lemon with this smart meter program. Why don't you stand up and do what's right, suspend it, and give the people of Ontario an honest, sensible approach to dealing with the problems that you guys have put them with?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: First, I want to make it clear from the onset, just in case people had lingering doubts or just in case my message wasn't as clear as I would want it to be, that I will be supporting this motion. I do have some questions.

The thrust of the motion is just, "Stop—not slow down, stop, unless and until you get it right." It's as simple as that. That's not rocket science. It seems to me that's what folks have been telling MPPs across Ontario over the course of the last weeks and months.

The motion does talk about having optional participation in time-of-use program metering, and I'm not sure what that would mean for a person who opted out or opted in. I really don't, but that's fine. We know the thrust of the motion, huh?

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Slow it down.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Not slow it down, stop it, Mr. Murdoch. Put a halt to it. It has run amok. It has run off the track.

It's amazing that the government stands here today, indeed with hubris, when Robert Benzie, a respected journalist, Queen's Park bureau chief, in today's Toronto Star, dated September 28, 2010, after some polling across Ontario—and look, there are margins of error in polls, but I've got to tell you that when a poll of Ontarians says that 76% of the people polled say they would like to see another party in power, the margin of error is certainly no comfort to this government.

And when I tell you that this poll by a very long-standing—quite frankly, it's Angus Reid. Angus Reid is an independent polling firm, but it's the firm retained by the Toronto Star. Everybody knows it, it's no secret—I'm not letting the cat out of the bag; school kids know—

the Toronto Star is a Liberal newspaper, and that's fine. We know that. As long as people know it, we understand that.

Sometimes we get invited to grade 5 classes, because that's the first year that kids take civics in elementary school, and then many of us get invited to grade 10 classes. One of the things I like doing when I'm going down to, say, Monsignor Clancy or wherever down in Thorold, or Princess Elizabeth down in Welland, I'll pick up at least three of the Toronto papers: the Star, the Globe, the Sun, the Post; I don't think they sell the Post in Welland. It just doesn't have the circulation.

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I'll take it to a classroom to show youngsters how the three newspapers could have three very different front pages. Even when they're reporting on the same event, they can have three very different perspectives. I think it's a reasonably valuable learning device to help maybe cultivate critical thinking, and I'm a fan of critical thinking. Seventy-six per cent of people polled said they would like to see another party in power; 86%—in the polling world, that's pretty darn close to unanimity—of Ontarians say it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago, and I know who the other 14% are. They're the ones up in Rosedale and places like that. I don't get into those neighbourhoods often, but I know where they are. They're the people with the Rolex watches and the Montblanc pens and, heck, not the Cadillacs but the Mercedes-Benzes, the big S series, the S600, the V-12 engine.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Never been in one.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yakabuski notes. Not that I begrudge him one, but I'd far sooner see him in a North American car, perhaps something coming out of Oshawa; that new Camaro is pretty slick, isn't it?

Eighty-six per cent say it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago. The article specifically connects electricity prices with that huge number of people who say that it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago. "The global recession might officially be over, but the new HST and rising hydro bills have left 86% of Ontarians claiming 'it is harder now than it was two years ago to make ends meet.'"

Ontarians have to endure another year-plus of this? People are scared because people don't see this train slowing down. This is a case where the Premier, in his game of chicken with the Ontario public, has taken the steering wheel and thrown it out the window. That's scary stuff. That leaves the rest of us living in real fear, because the Premier has acknowledged absolutely no control.

Mr. John Yakabuski: All we can do is try to flatten the tires.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yakabuski notes.

I go down to my riding on weekends like everybody else does. I'm not sure the Liberals go home as often as they used to. If they do go home, I suspect some of them are more inclined to cloister themselves than not.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Half of them aren't here most days. They're hiding somewhere.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yakabuski notes.

The first stop on Saturday morning is Welland market. You know that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Never been there, either.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yakabuski notes.

And the Welland market has a wide range of people of all ages going there. The older folks still tend to go early in the morning. You've got to get there around 6:30 to see the older folks. And then the young families show up around 7:30, 8 o'clock; kids in strollers and moms and dads holding kids. The market's a busy place. It's a real hubbub.

Interruption.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly.

This is the corporate stuff on Rogers Communications. I want to thank the legislative library. I'm going to get into that later. You'll draw the connection. Bad, evil Rogers Communications Inc.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes. The board of governors includes David Peterson. No wonder they're a screw-up.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Shurman notes.

I'd like to hear from some of the Liberal backbenchers who are going to, I presume, participate in this debate and pretend that they're—well, there's the old story about George Burns, the American comedian. Shortly before his death, he was asked by an interviewer what the secret was to his success. He replied, "The secret to my success is sincerity. And once you've learned how to fake sincerity, you've got it made."

The government had one heck of a caucus meeting today. They had a caucus meeting up on the second floor, down in the big room. They got fed. I don't know whether they got wine—well, there was whining; I know that, but that's w-h-i-n-i-n-g. I suspect they didn't get—because it's early in the day and the House is sitting in the afternoon. What's a Liberal's favourite whine? "I think I'm going to lose my seat."

Look, they would have understood it if the Toronto Sun had displayed these poll numbers. The Liberals could have said, "Oh, heck, it's just the Sun"—the National Post, even more so. The National Post? Heck, they hire ex-cons. Well, they hire current—not even ex-cons. Conrad Black was still in jail when he was working for the National Post.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Doing a good job too—good writing.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I prefer Konrad Yakabuski, myself.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He's good too, but he's with the Globe.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yakabuski notes.

Interjection: Relation?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yeah, of course.

So here we are. It wasn't the Sun. It wasn't the National Post. It wasn't the Globe and Mail. It was the Toronto Star, the newspaper that, from time to time, will

attempt, through editorials or even bent, to apologize for this government's serious shortcomings.

So it was a very interesting caucus meeting; I can tell you that with certainty. There was some trepidation, and although I'm not certain, I'm pretty sure that the Premier of Ontario, facing his caucus, said, "Don't worry. It's just a poll; there's a margin of error." The fact that 76% of people, with, let's say, a 4% or 5% margin of error, want to see another party in power really doesn't give much weight to the "Don't worry" admonition by the Premier, does it? But it was, "Don't worry, because we've got to stick to the message." It's all about messaging, right?

The wacky, dopey thing the other day was that the Premier was telling people to do laundry on Saturday. He's got four or five kids of his own.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They've all left home.

Mr. Peter Kormos: But they were babies at one point. Poor Mrs. McGuinty obviously was saddled with all the laundry in that household, or else Mr. McGuinty would know that when you've got two, three or four kids, little ones, especially if one or two of them are still in diapers, you don't do laundry on Saturday morning; you do it every day, if not twice a day.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Every day was laundry day at our house. Fourteen kids—the washing machine never stopped.

Mr. Peter Kormos: See what happens when you have 14 children? The washing machine never stops, Yakabuski notes.

This is as wacky—you know, I was telling you about folks at the market. Folks at the market talk to me. What do they think? They talk to me, and they've talked to me now week after week after week. Whether it's the market, whether it's the Hungarian Presbyterian Church, whether it's the Hungarian Hall on Helles Avenue, whether it's down at the Italian hall in Port Colborne, or up in Thorold at the Legion, people are telling me about their hydro bills. People are telling me about increased hydro rates, along with being hammered by Mr. McGuinty's HST and how it's making their lives less affordable.

And by God—you know, I didn't need a high-priced pollster to tell me that 86% of Ontarians say it's harder to make ends meet than it was two years ago. I didn't need a pollster to tell me that. You find that out in the Legion hall down on Morningstar Avenue. You find that out at the Port Colborne market on Friday morning. You find that out when you're over at Comisso's or Pupo's, a supermarket, picking up some groceries for the weekend, or when you go down to Niagara Sausage on Rusholme Road—it used to be Ontario Road—to get your barbecue sausage. Eighty-six per cent.

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I understand how government members would want to have their fears comforted. Some of them probably, in their minds, envision themselves in the fetal position, perhaps with a thumb in the mouth, looking for a pat on the back, being patted, petted. That's as close as you—Premier Dad has now become Premier Bad.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I have to ask you to withdraw that.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Of course I withdraw that, Speaker. I'm surprised it came out of my mouth. I shocked even myself. I don't know what came over me. Perhaps if the Sergeant-at-Arms could ask Mr. Yakabuski to move a couple of rows over, his bad influence would be less evident. It's John Yak who's getting me into trouble all the time. You know that, don't you, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I have to remind you to refer to members by their riding names.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you, Speaker.

The smart meters aren't so smart. What was that movie? The pages know what it was. It was a silly movie—Dumb and Dumber. The smart meters are like Dumb and Dumber 2, the sequel to Dumb and Dumber—perhaps Dumb and Dumbest, or Stupid and Stupider.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Son of Stupid.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yakabuski notes.

Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats have been telling stories about real folks in question period now for weeks since the House has resumed sitting. They're stories about real people in all parts of Ontario—the north, the south, big city, small town, rural, urban—who simply can't take it anymore. They can't afford it.

By God, the minister talked about the government working arm in arm with Ontarians. Well, it's pretty hard to believe when the government has its hands in every Ontarian's pockets. That's not arm in arm, that's hands in pockets—and not their own.

Why government backbenchers couldn't prevail upon their Premier and simply say, "Whoa. The heat out there is far too intense. Perhaps save a few of us"—we know this ship doesn't have enough life jackets or lifeboats to rescue all those who are now in peril, but for Pete's sake, at least save some of them. Show some respect for some. Some of them are hard-working MPPs, and I, quite frankly, am going to miss them in the next Parliament—some of them; not all of them. That's if I'm fortunate enough to be elected myself. Who knows? I'm here at the will of electors.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a small wager on you.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Yakabuski notes.

I've been around here a little while. I've read a few things about Parliaments and about the roles of parliamentarians. One of the things, as I understand it, is that government caucus members, backbenchers—and that's not a pejorative term—their job is to be reality checks for the Premier and the Premier's office. Because just like me and my Conservative colleagues, they're out at their market squares, too. They know what people are saying. They know that people are mad as hell about the smart meters and the skyrocketing electricity prices, that people are frightened, that they're fearful for themselves and their families. These are the same people—what, 300,000 of them?—who have lost good industrial jobs under the watch of Mr. McGuinty.

I was so pleased when the Premier announced on Monday that our question period is now going to be

available on demand. Eight days of question period are going to be available on demand on the Legislative Assembly website, so that people who can't access it through their—you can't get it on antenna—cable or through their satellite can go onto their computers. The website, of course, is ontla.on.ca—"ontla" for "Ontario Legislative Assembly." In fact, some people may be watching this process right here and now because it's live streaming when the House is sitting, but there's going to be a little feature on that website now where people can, on demand, select any one of the previous eight question periods. I thought that was a very exciting thing, because it will give more people access to question period, which arguably is the highlight of the day, although these opposition days are pretty interesting as well.

The problem is, your cable has to be working before you can receive this on your television set. Now, Rogers Communications Inc.—Rogers Cable—has got the worst customer service in the world. I can't believe that company is still in business. They should be put out of business. People who are watching this on television instead of their computer right now and using Rogers should be cancelling their Rogers contracts immediately, because Rogers will rip them off, Rogers will abuse them, Rogers will overcharge them, and Rogers will not fix their box when their box breaks down. First of all, you get on the phone to Rogers, and you're sitting on the phone for hours at a time talking to people who have no authority to really do anything. For instance, when Rogers says, "Punch in your phone number," you punch in your phone number and then some dough head says, "What's your name?" "My name is exactly in front of you. That's why you had me punch in my phone number. You tell me my name. You know my name." Then you give them your name and your address and they say, "What's your postal code?" For Pete's sake, the postal code is right in front of you too. They say that's for security purposes. What do you mean, security purposes? I'm calling you to give you money.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Tourist route, Speaker, tourist route: electricity, electricity consumption, smart meters, opposition motion.

I still don't have cable in my apartment. Those guys charge me a fortune, an arm and a leg, and I still don't have cable. I've spent hours on the phone with Rogers people. I finally sent a letter today to Nadir Mohamed. He's the president and chief executive officer. He's not going to open the letter; he's not going to read it. The letter, I thought, was rather clever, because I talked about options I had—Small Claims Court, because it would be fun to grill a Rogers executive in Small Claims Court—but they won't give me a detailed bill. That's how arrogant they are. And I thought, Small Claims Court, maybe with a Toronto Sun columnist sitting in to do a little bit of a write-up on Rogers—bad Rogers. Rogers is bad.

Who's on the board? David Peterson, former Premier. No wonder Rogers is such a screw-up. He's the beer-and-

wine-in-corner stores guy. He's the guy who said, during that election campaign in 1987, when Mel Swart, my predecessor, was running, "I have a very specific plan to reduce auto insurance premiums."

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd remind the member that the topic is smart meters.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I appreciate your direction and guidance in this regard. Of course we're talking about smart meters and the opposition day motion. But let me—this is a funny story.

David Peterson had a very specific plan to reduce auto insurance premiums, and his staff and the handlers went, "Oh," because there was no such plan. He blurted this out. This was unscripted. Well, all Hades broke loose. He got elected, and, of course, there was no plan. I got elected here in 1988 and we had a wonderful time holding the Liberal feet—plural of feet, feet—to the fire, because of course they had no—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yakabuski interjects.

It was just incredible that a guy who fouled up auto insurance in Ontario as badly as David Peterson—he's the guy who introduced no-fault; thanks—is also fouling up Rogers Communications and Rogers Cable. If you have Rogers Cable, cancel it. Go with a satellite dish. Speaker, honest, I'm going to save you money and a lot of grief if you follow my advice: Cancel Rogers; go with a satellite dish. Rogers, bad; satellite dish, good.

We've got a scenario here where people are being taken to the cleaners. We know—well, the government doesn't know because it's been so reluctant; it's been in denial. Now, a member here was ruled out of order for suggesting that the government had its head stuck—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Somewhere—up.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Hillier interjects.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd remind the member to stay with the topic, which is smart meters.

Mr. Peter Kormos: But it's Mr. Hillier who was being unparliamentary, not me. Earlier today—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Point of order, Madam Speaker, I don't believe there was any reference to me withdrawing or being unparliamentary when I referred to the party as I did.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): That's not a point of order.

The member for Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Hillier can be a very tricky guy sometimes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask you to refer to him by his riding name, and remember that we're talking about smart meters.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, whose comments I listened to very carefully, has a skilful and playful command of the English language that I admire. Look at what people are suggesting: that the government is ostriching. I don't know whether this was what Mr. Hillier was suggesting, because he wouldn't complete the sentence. I'm not going to say anything unparliamentary,

but I took it as suggesting that, like an ostrich, or at least a mythical ostrich—I don't know whether ostriches really do this, but at least we perceive them as doing it—the government has got its head buried in the sand so it can't see what's going on around it; it's got tunnel vision.

And 86% of Ontarians think they're doing worse than they were two years ago. "Was the HST the right thing or the wrong thing to do?"—a question put to Ontarians. Because the HST, of course, helped skyrocket electricity rates. What did Ontarians have to say to pollster Angus Reid when they were asked, "Was the HST the right thing or the wrong thing to do?" Eighty-one per cent said "wrong."

Mr. John Yakabuski: Eighty-one per cent.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I don't know. Let's be generous. Let's give them a five-point margin of error.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's still 75%. Give them—

Mr. Peter Kormos: You're still going down the pipes. The flushing noise is going to be overwhelming. Eighty-one per cent of Ontarians say, "HST: wrong thing to do."

Oh, eco fees.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What did they say about that?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Ontarians were asked by Angus Reid. I read it in the *Star*. Rob Benzie, Queen's Park bureau chief for the *Toronto Star*, an experienced journalist—never made an error in an item that I'm aware of. Nobody else has told me about it. Were eco fees the right thing or wrong thing to do? Seventy-three per cent of Ontarians said they were the wrong thing to do.

Here's one that particularly irks me: Is online gambling the right thing or wrong thing to do? What did Ontarians say in response to that question: "Is online gambling the right thing or wrong thing to do?" Seventy-one per cent of Ontarians said it's the wrong thing to do.

What's going on? Why and how can this small group of Liberals somehow think they know more about everything than some 12 million, 13 million Ontarians?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Because we are inspired. That's why. We are inspired.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Ruprecht interjects, to his detriment.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm sorry I mentioned it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Ruprecht apologizes. Would you like to try again, sir?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I remind the member that we're talking about—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. We're talking about smart meters, to bring you back.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you, Speaker; You're quite right. We're talking about smart versus not-so-smart, and I'm saying to you: Why is it that politicians think the voters are smart when they elect that politician, but the voters aren't that smart when they defeat that politician? You see, the Liberals thought the voters were pretty smart, back three years ago. The voters in Welland I think were pretty clever as well. The voters are always right. So how come the voters were smart three years ago

and now the voters are stupid? Because the voters don't like the HST—"No, they're wrong." The voters don't like eco fees—"Well, they're wrong," says Mr. McGuinty and his Liberal gang.

The voters don't like online gambling. "Well, they're wrong," says Mr. McGuinty.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Can the member please stay on topic? I've been listening just now, and he's way off topic. He's going away to the left, away to the right, but he's certainly not on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. I remind the member to confine his comments to smart meters.

Mr. Peter Kormos: And I want to extend to the member for Davenport a hearty hola, and welcome back to the Legislative Assembly.

Here we are, this government insisting that everybody is wrong and only they're right. Is this a personality disorder? Can a government have a personality disorder? Because that's symptomatic. You look at the DSM manual, and that's symptomatic of a certain personality disorder.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, when they all start drinking the same Kool-Aid, Peter, they're all going to get it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Interesting comment by Mr. Yakabuski.

What is it? What is it? Every one of these government members got elected believing that they were going to make a difference here. Every one of these members came here convinced that they were going to do better than the guy or the gal that they were running against. I believe that, and I understand. I don't deny that to any one of them—well, maybe a couple, but by and large, I don't deny that to the vast majority of them. There's not big money to be made here, and quite frankly, once you're finished here, you were a somebody and then you're a nobody. You're not even a footnote. That's noted by Mr. Ruprecht.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Are we allowed to eat in here? If so, would the member from Davenport share it with the rest of us?

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you, Speaker. I thought for a minute Mr. Murdoch was hungry and he wanted us to order something.

But what is it about this? It's a fortress mentality, amongst other things. Is it an element of fear or subjugation, or is it the group syndrome that prevents government members who know full well—government members aren't surprised about the poll results published by the *Toronto Star* today. Government members know that the vast majority of Ontarians don't like the HST.

Why, the member for Scarborough-Rouge River, doing his House duty here in the Legislature, knows that the vast majority of Ontarians don't like the HST, and I don't know—I don't want to put words in his mouth by any stretch of the imagination, but I know him to be an honourable person. He has a distinguished city hall

career. I know that he feels a little bit—"Ahem": He has to clear his throat before he spins the government line with his constituents, right? You know that, because he's an honourable man; he's an honourable person.

Why, look, we've got the member from Mississauga—Streetsville here. I know him to be an honourable person. I can't help but think that when the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, sitting here in his chair, talks to his constituents that he has to clear his throat and overcome the hesitation when it comes to the government spin around HST. We know that 86% of Ontarians feel that they are worse off rather than better off from two years ago.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Laundry day is Saturday, but Liberal spin day is every day.

Mr. Peter Kormos: That's a wonderful line.

We know that 86% of Ontarians say our rising electricity costs and the HST are what have made their lives worse off, as compared to better off, over the last two years. I can't help but think—there's the member for Brampton West sitting over there. There's the member for Brampton West sitting there in this chamber, and I can't help but believe that the member for Brampton West has difficulty with—no, him I believe; he wouldn't have any difficulty with the government's spin lines. But the member for Bramalea—Gore—Malton does. I'm sure that member has difficulty with the government spin lines. Sitting right next to him is the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan. He's up there—

Interjection: There he is.

1700

Mr. Peter Kormos: He's here, but he's up there in Thunder Bay. I can't imagine how he can, in good conscience—86% say they're worse off, 14% say they're better off; maybe they're all in Thunder Bay. Maybe all of that 14%—somehow there's an enclave of the Bentley, Rolls-Royce, Rolex set. The people who are here in the government benches have been elected at least once, many of them twice, and some of them are veterans. They know you don't win elections when 81% of the people are against you. They know that you don't win elections when 73% of the people are against you. These Liberal backbenchers know you don't win elections when 71% of the people are against you. When 76% of the population say they would like to see another party in power, what are these guys going to do?

You know those signs outside service stations; they're on a vertical rod and they spin like that? So—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd remind the member to talk about smart meters in the time remaining.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I've got so little time left. But let me finish that image. So what are these government members going to do? Are they going to be in front of the service station, where it spins in the wind, and one side of the sign is going to be red and one side is going to be blue and the other side is going to be green, so it's, "Whichever one you prefer, vote for me"? No, the public doesn't go for that. The public is smart. Let's accept that

as a premise. If you're not prepared to listen to the public and take direction from the people of Ontario, then you have no business being in power, none whatsoever. When, even worse, you treat the public with disdain, you tell them, "Go away. We know better than you"—by God, don't you tell that to some retiree from a steel mill or a carborundum factory or some guy whose back is broken and his arms are arthritic, his shoulder is gone because he's been laying block or brick all his life and who's now fearful, along with his elderly wife, that he won't be able to afford to continue to live in his own home, the home that he's paid for.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On a point of order—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It's not a point of order. I remind the member for Davenport that it's not a point of order. The member for Welland, you have time to finish.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member for Davenport's defence of Bob Rae will have to occur in some other discussion or debate. But I'm pleased to see that Mr. Rae does have some friends left, and the member for Davenport is clearly one of them, and I trust that Mr. Rae will canvass with him as he's going door to door. I'm sure that will be a big help with some of his ethnic voters who still feel betrayed.

Mr. John Yakabuski: How is Fidel doing anyway, Tony?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Oh, Mr. Yakabuski.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm sorry, Mr. Ruprecht?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Welland will stay with the topic, the smart meters.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm just trying to ensure that these voices get recorded in Hansard because this is a debate, and it's not a simple debate, it's a complex debate, and this chamber—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Let me remind you that you have the floor. You do not have to quarterback other members of the chamber.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm sorry, Speaker. Sometimes my generosity of spirit overwhelms me, and my inclusivity. It's probably a problem I have, being too inclusive.

What will be interesting to see is how many government members are here to vote against this motion.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Enough.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Aha. Exactly. Mr. Brown says, "Enough"—just barely enough, because they want to defeat the motion, but they don't all want to be stuck or identified with their support for smart meters.

This is talking about electricity. Smart meters are going to be amongst the—there's only supposed to be one third rail. But there's a third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, 10th, 11th, 12th rail for the Liberals in this upcoming provincial election. Smart meters are going to be a third rail, and you're going to have a hard time disavowing your association with it when you've spoken in support of it and when you vote against a relatively benign motion. I was very surprised. Usually opposition day motions are hard-hitting, aggressive, partisan things.

This is the least partisan motion I've ever witnessed on an opposition day, and I find it remarkable that we won't have at least—it would be truly effective for some government members to support this motion. They could then divorce themselves from the kamikaze policies of Mr. McGuinty and the Liberals. Instead of having to rely upon the 19% or the 29%, maybe they could start to rely on the 81% or the 71% and appeal to them for votes.

Sometimes you've crossed the threshold. It's the Edsel syndrome: You can never recover from it. Brian Mulroney suffered it. He could have walked on water at that point towards the end of his career as Prime Minister and the headline would have been "Brian Mulroney Can't Swim," because everybody had just turned on him.

You see, the problem is, this government has, I think, reached that point as well. So maybe it is just throwing hands up, maybe it's just "Get the gas oven going"—because, Lord knows, if you have an electric oven, you can't afford to turn it on—"blow out the pilot light and just lay me down to sleep." Maybe that's the perspective. Or, in fact, "We'll go out in flames." But that's a real disservice to the people of Ontario; it really is. And I expect, quite frankly, more from these people across, some of whom I have great regard and respect for.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm glad to stand up in my place and speak about this motion. I listened to the Leader of the Opposition when he started speaking about this motion. I listened to him carefully, with an open mind. I wanted to see if I want to support you or not support it. I came with an open mind to listen to the opposition about what they are going to say. It may be something I don't know. I listened; I didn't find anything.

I tried again to listen to the member from Welland, for almost 40 minutes, to see if he had something new to say about smart meters, why he is supporting this initiative or this motion. I didn't find anything, because he spoke about many different things except the smart meter.

So, Madam Speaker, as you know, life evolves on a daily basis, technology evolves on a daily basis. I remember when I bought my BlackBerry a couple of years ago. Today it is almost obsolete because technology updates itself on a regular basis. So that's why, when we installed the meter in many different homes across the province of Ontario—it was almost between 40 and 60 years ago, when that meter was very advanced. At the present time, we have a lot of advanced technology that gives us the ability to read the meter from a certain office somewhere in a city or in the province. It gives us an accurate reading on every meter, and it also gives us the chance to evaluate the consumption of hydro on a regular basis. That's why, when we introduced them to Ontarians, we wanted to modernize the electricity system in the province of Ontario. We want to be accurate when we price people across the province of Ontario. We want to also divide the consumption into three levels, which are peak time, mid-peak and off-peak time, which starts from Monday to Thursday, from 7 to 9 o'clock evening time as

a peak time, and from 9 to 7 o'clock in the morning from Monday to Friday—to Saturday; I'm sorry—as also mid-peak time. Also, we want off-time to start from 9 in the evening to 7 o'clock in the morning from Monday to Friday, and also the weekend to be off-peak time, to allow the residents of the province of Ontario to pay less if they choose to use electricity in those times.

I had a smart meter installed in my house in the city of London. London Hydro decided to install the whole city, and they expect to finish by April. At that time, the whole city will be under smart meter watch, and people will have the choice whether they use the electricity during the peak time or off-time or at mid-time. They're given the choice.

1710

I listened to the speaker when he spoke, and I paid attention to him. I hope he's paying attention to my speech, because we listened to them. They usually give us another view of the story.

All Ontarians, as a result of the downturn of the economy, are facing tough times. We understand that. We listen to our constituents. They come to our offices on a regular basis. We go to events on a regular basis also and mix and mingle with the hard-working people of Ontario, who tell us stories. That's why we came here, back to our caucus or to this place, to discuss this important issue and also to try our best to solve and alleviate some of the problems they are facing on a regular basis. That's also why the Minister of Finance today stood up in his place and announced a strategy to support the people of Ontario, to give them an energy credit to support them in a difficult time, which affects 750,000 seniors in this province of Ontario, who worked hard for all of us to build this beautiful province for you, me and all the people who are going to come after us. Also, it's going to affect almost 2.5 million people, hard-working Ontarians, who have fixed incomes or have no ability to make extra cash. That's why everyone will be allowed to benefit from those credits, to support them in paying their hydro bill.

I know, we know, everybody knows that we're facing difficult times in Ontario. That's why we're standing with the people of Ontario to support them, to give them a chance to be able to remain in their homes, to be able to pay their bills.

We have a plan. We have a plan to work with the people of Ontario. We have a plan to make sure we have enough energy, enough electricity to keep the lights on, unlike the other party, which in 2003 put this province in the dark. Since we got elected in 2003, we have created more than 6,000 megawatts, and we are also in the process of creating more through the green energy strategy, to make sure most of the people of this province benefit from the strategy. Also, we're engaging every city, every member, every place in the province of Ontario to be a part of the strategy, because we believe it's important, especially when you engage the people of Ontario, to allow them to participate, to be a part of this process to make sure all the lights stay on every day, 24 hours a day.

I listened to the opposition trying to put the freeze on these important steps. I read some kind of a report from the Ottawa region, and many different cities in the province of Ontario showed us they benefited from the smart meter. Their consumption went down. Also, they showed us the benefits from the peak time, off-peak time and mid-time, because they choose to use their electricity, and they do the laundry, they use their dishwasher, they do whatever they need in off-peak times, which I think our electricity, you know, produced and sent to the United States at a cheaper cost. It would be a benefit for our economy, for our community, for our province. We're trying to utilize this production of electricity, especially the off-peak times, when no company, no factory is open. It's our strategy to create a choice for the people of Ontario.

Also, I'm wondering—the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke was talking about whether people can opt out from that strategy. I don't think so. Technically, you can't do that; they cannot. But we have an electronic system that can feed the whole city or the whole province or the whole area. You cannot tell this person, "You can be on an old meter" and this person, "You can be on a new meter, and you can and you can't." We want to have an equal field, where everyone has a chance to conserve, if they want to conserve.

That's our strategy. That's one part of our strategy. We're going to continue proceeding with our strategy because it's the right strategy, and the people of Ontario understand it. In my riding of London–Fanshawe, in my city of London, people are looking forward to April to start using the smart meters to benefit from conservation and to benefit from the low price.

We cannot continue to say the price of energy is going to remain that little, that much, because we have to have extra pricing somehow to refurbish our system, to have enough for generations, to produce for all the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: The members opposite can speak as much as they want. When they were in power, we had no lights. That's not our strategy. Our strategy is to continue refurbishing, to continue producing more megawatts to support the people of Ontario, and to keep the lights on.

Thank you for allowing me to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I'm pleased to follow the member for London–Fanshawe. He's exuberant and quite a fast talker. The reason I say that is that, for me, it would be daunting to follow the member from Welland. So it's nice to have a little bit of a break. I'm captivated by whatever the member from Welland was talking about. The statistics are compelling. Those jumped out at me.

At any rate, Speaker, as you have pointed out a number of times this afternoon, we are debating smart meters, and the relative merits, the relative demerits, if that's a word, of this smart meter proposal.

This debate's been going on for five years now. Five years ago, we were given some information—actually, Dr. Q chaired a standing committee and visited my riding, and that was almost five years ago. But I can tell you that over the last five years, people in my area have not been referring to these tax machines as smart. They have other words, and "smart" is not one of them.

We have heard this afternoon that these so-called smart meters, rather than adding up the total usage of electricity between billing periods, determine the time of day that usage occurred, allowing a higher rate to be charged during the peak hours. We've been told the goal is to force consumers, because of that, to shift their consumption to the lower rate, the late-night hours when electricity is a little cheaper. So, in theory, these so-called smart meters could reduce peak demand.

However, we've seen a number of problems arise when this theory is put into practice. As I mentioned, it was almost five years ago that some of these problems were outlined. It was the justice committee, and the member for Etobicoke North chaired hearings. To their credit, they travelled the province almost five years ago to discuss smart meters. I know they visited Norfolk county. That was in February 2006. The Haldimand Federation of Agriculture testified down in our area. Frank Sommer pointed out their concern that smart meters signalled the creation of "a large and costly bureaucracy" that will negatively impact Ontario's farmers vis-à-vis their competitors. That was almost five years ago. He noted, "We're concerned that Ontario may be embarking on an experiment that will set us on a course that will leave our farm industry and the rest of Ontario on a less competitive footing with our neighbours...." That was five years ago.

Carol Chudy, who's associated with the Clean, Affordable Energy Alliance, picked up on that theme: "Reliable and reasonably priced power is essential to their sustainability"—again, referring to farmers. "Much of the farming activities that are energy-intensive simply cannot be shifted. You can't turn off your greenhouse at peak time. You can't stop your heating or air conditioning"—electrically controlled fans, for example—"for livestock, milking and storage of product etc."

Ms. Chudy further outlined the smart meter challenge for business: "Smaller businesses having hours of operation coinciding with peak-of-day use will likewise be penalized."

I'll continue with her presentation: "Someone has pointed out that the McGuinty government is encouraging to throw your dryer on in the night time, and yet the insurance companies indicate to us that dryers are a cause of house fires. There are some things that just have not been carefully thought through."

There was also testimony that day—these hearings were held at the Little River Inn in Simcoe. It's a great motel/restaurant combination.

1720

Again, going back almost five years ago, with respect to the cost, we were told, "With regard to cost, the Min-

istry of Energy indicates installation costs of about \$1 billion." Mr. Hampton was sitting in on those hearings, and he indicated that it's probably now closer to \$2 billion.

This is something this government was told five years ago: \$2 billion, plus maintenance, plus monitoring costs. The initial cost for the meter is approximately \$500 per household. That was the estimate five years ago, plus monthly fees for monitoring and processing of information. The key word here is "estimate" because, again as was pointed out, no firm costs and no firm benefits have been determined. These figures were not presented five years ago, and they have not been presented in any accurate way today.

Fast-forward five years. Here we are. We're still debating smart meters, and some of our worst fears are becoming realized. Smart meters have meant little conservation and a major cost to consumers. We request this government to do the right thing, do the smart thing, if you will: Hit the pause button on this program. Provide some choice; allow ratepayers to opt out of something that's going to be very, very costly, something this government was told five years ago on their own standing committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to be able to speak to the motion that we have on the floor here. I will tell you that I will be voting against the motion. Rather than explaining in my own words why, I think I'll leave to it Gordon Miller, Ontario's Environmental Commissioner. Gordon Miller said, just this week, "It has been proposed to let people choose whether to pay a flat rate for their electricity or have time-of-use pricing. I believe this would be short-sighted. Going back to the same old, same old that didn't work is not the answer."

I happen to agree with the Environmental Commissioner that going back to what doesn't work is not a useful thing to do, so let's talk a little bit about what we are trying to do to move forward. Our energy strategy involves a number of things. The first is reliability. Obviously, one of the things that we needed to do to increase reliability was to increase generation, to make sure that we can generate enough power for Ontario in Ontario. We've been working on that.

The other thing that we found out when we came into government was that the transmission lines in Ontario were woefully outdated and needed a lot of attention, and we have been investing in new transmission lines so that the power won't go out because of inadequate transmission capacity. And yes, both of those have cost money, and we make no apology for making sure that the lights go on.

One of the things that I don't think people have talked about very much is that with the smart meters, it actually has an impact on local reliability. This isn't an urban issue particularly. If you happen to be in northern Ontario or certainly in cottage country, you would know that whenever the wind blows, trees fall down, they knock out the lines, and the power goes out. Not because of bad

transmission, not because of lack of generation, but simply when a great big white pine falls down on a transmission line, the lights go out. The problem right now is that it takes a long time to figure out whose lights have gone out—and trust me; I know that. I've sat in my cottage in the middle of winter with the lights out for two or three days. Thank God for wood stoves. It's one of the great things. You can chop a hole in the ice and get water. Okay, we can handle it. But where the smart meters come into this is, right now, hydro depends on either people calling in or walking the line. So it's not unusual on our road to find a linesman walking the line not to repair it; just trying to figure out where the breaks are. With smart meters, they can find out via the smart meter, which will transmit the information to figure out who all is out, and see the pattern for the entire area immediately so they can follow the grid and see what-all is out and get a sense of where the problems are. Instead of wasting half a day or several hours or even several days, they can get to fixing it instead of trying to figure it out. That's one of the side benefits of smart meters that nobody's talking about.

Another thing that we're doing, because we are moving away from coal-fired generation and moving to cleaner forms of generation, is cleaning up our air. Again, for me, that's a real issue, because when I grew up in Guelph, nobody ever worried about smog in Guelph. Do you know when we started to worry about dirty air and smog in Guelph? It was actually when the coal-fired generators at Nanticoke became part of the base power supply in Ontario. On hot days when the south wind came up toward Guelph, that's when we had smog days. That's when we had smog days, when we became reliant on coal power. Now that we are less reliant on coal power, we can clean up our air. I think that's important for the health of the people of Ontario.

What about jobs? A lot of people have been out of work, and a lot of people have been out of work in Guelph because we're a manufacturing town, a big auto sector town. My largest auto parts manufacturer, because of our Green Energy Act, is switching some of the manufacturing capacity away from auto parts and into wind turbine parts. More people have got called back to work. Just this summer, we had a major announcement from a company called Canadian Solar, which has been manufacturing solar panels in China. Because of the Green Energy Act, they said, "We're going to repatriate our Canadian manufacturing, possibly all of our North American manufacturing, in Ontario." They looked around Ontario and said, "Guelph is the place we want to do this." As they expand their business in Guelph, there will be up to 500 more jobs related to manufacturing, solar manufacturing.

So I am very supportive of our energy strategy and all the different things we can do.

I do want to talk briefly about time of use. First of all, I think people need to understand that the mid-peak price is the same as the normal price, if I can put it that way. So there are times of the day, if you're on smart metering, where you pay the usual price, some times

where you get a cut rate because it's off-peak, some times where you pay a premium because it's at the highest-demand time of day. The Leader of the Opposition was up this morning saying how we were requiring people to do their laundry at 2 o'clock in the morning. That's nonsense. The off-peak cut rate cuts in at about 9 in the evening—and all weekend. I don't know when the Leader of the Opposition does his laundry, but—Madam Speaker, I'm sure you can relate to this—I have a couple of kids, I've got grandkids, I've been working most of my time as a mom or a grandmother. I often stick in a load of laundry before I go out in the morning or when I come home at night. Even now, I often do a couple of loads of laundry before I go out to an event on a Saturday or Sunday. I don't know what world the Leader of the Opposition is in, but real women do their laundry whenever they get a chance, and that can include weekends and evenings.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I'm glad to be able to talk on this motion, for a little bit, anyway. I'm glad to see that the government is actually debating with us today. The last time I debated, they wouldn't even debate a bill that they had; it was their own bill and they wouldn't talk about it. So I'm glad to see today that they finally sort of woke up over there and are debating.

It's really sad; I haven't seen any of them want to support this, which is such a simple thing to support. We're not saying you have to take the program away; we just want it to stop. They keep telling us over there, every time they speak, that they're speaking on behalf of the people of Ontario. Would that be that 14% that supports them? I guess. It is a little discouraging that that's all they keep telling us, that they're speaking on behalf of the people. I don't know who they're talking about, the 14%, because in my riding, it is really upsetting to—I guess it's probably the 81% or the 85% or whatever.

1730

I have some people in my riding who have sent me letters, and this is just a small bit of what they have sent me. I have a constituent named Gord Smith, of Markdale, who explains how the government is making life less affordable for him. This is what he said: "I was just reading in today's paper of another tax levy on hydro consumers. With the smart meters, the time-of-day usage costs, the HST on our bills once again, the consumers are being hit in the pocketbook. Also, just when does the debt reduction charge on our hydro bills cease to be in effect? With my own personal debts at least I could see an end date, but not so with this added cost." That's from Gord Smith of Markdale, and a lot of people are saying that.

I have another constituent, Greg McNicol of Owen Sound. He writes to us and says, "You want the residents of Ontario to save energy and we do for two reasons—one [is] to save money and the other [is] to save electricity. Unfortunately, the revenue for the large corporation went down because of the success of a program that they developed, but please do not allow them to increase the revenue on the backs of the people who have worked

hard to reduce their energy use." These are, again, people from my riding who are writing to us, and they're upset. These smart meters are not smart, and they're costing the people of Ontario a lot of money.

Here's another one.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Ted says he knows there's another one. There's more, Ted; I just picked up three that I thought I would read to the House.

Sue Gosnell says, "I do not question the necessity to use our hydro during low-usage times, and conserve, etc. What I do seriously question is Hydro 'being in my home,' knowing when I'm using high volume and the potential infringement that brings. It has a feeling of 'Big Brother' watching me...."

"From the very insidious implementation of the HST to our smart meters and numerous other government implementations, it feels as if we have very little voice and there is a sense of our democracy eroding ... and many people I speak to share this perspective."

Most of the people we speak to in our riding have the same perspective. And it's not as if we're saying to end this program. What we're doing: Today the Ontario PC caucus introduced an opposition day motion that calls on Dalton McGuinty to freeze his smart meter program until the problems with the program's implementation have been fixed and families are given the choice to participate in the time-of-use program or not. That's all we're asking; it's not a big thing. I would hope that everyone would speak to this, even the ones who are representing the 14% of the people.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke's opposition day motion "to suspend the smart meter time-of-use program until billing problems are fixed"—I want to come back to that in a moment and ask him about that—"and Ontario families are given the option of whether to participate in the time-of-use program."

Speaking specifically to the motion, a couple of questions come to my mind. The first question that comes to my mind is, who decides "until billing problems are fixed"? Who makes that designation, and when do we decide that there are no longer any problems with the billing process that you're describing? Therefore, to me it seems very much like trying to prove a negative in science. You just can't prove a negative in science, so we're trying to get to that part. Then I hear other people talk about, "Smart meters aren't very smart"; they're reading emails, they're saying that they don't want this to be used at all. And when they don't want these to be used at all, it's in conflict with your resolution, your motion. We want to make sure we know what that is. So I do want to know about that.

Yes, there are some billing problems. There were billing problems before the meters were even used. There have been billing problems at every one of our constituency offices, where they talk to them about, "I think

there has been a problem with the billing.” When does the billing problem cease so that we can get on with the program? I do have a problem with that portion of the resolution.

“Ontario families are given the option of whether to participate” or not: What you’re basically saying is that the complexity of the system will now double. Now we’re going to have to have a system without the smart meters, with the smart meters, with the time-of-use and without the time-of-use. I think the complexity that you’re talking about goes against what many people and several countries have already said that they want to do and that they are moving towards. Governor Schwarzenegger in California is saying that it’s the smartest thing that they could do for their state.

What happens right now? Right now, we’ve got Brant, my riding. The city of Brantford, through its hydro, Brantford Power, has put in about 80% to 82% of all the meters. The hydro companies have plenty of people who have meters in their homes that are 30, 40, 50 and 60 years old. There has been no advancement of technology that we can use.

In terms of where we’re headed in this direction, this pause that’s being talked about, there have been two different stories coming on. It’s easy to get caught up in the here and now and the day-to-day politics that are going on. Parties quarrel back and forth. We were hearing some of the to and fro going on. We compete for headlines and we get wrapped up in the issue of the day, but before you know it, we’ve got the next day coming up and we’re still doing the same thing.

What we’re talking about here is defining—if you would for me very clearly; I would ask you to do so—when the billing problem gets fixed, who designates, how it gets designated, and, if there are any problems, does it stop again? That’s the difficulty here. It’s like, prove a negative science: It just can’t be done. But people hang on to that saying, “Until you can prove to me that that doesn’t have an impact, then we’re not going to use it.” I think maybe we’d better make sure that we understand that there’s a difference between the two. It’s almost like using a double negative in English.

The time-of-use pricing is just one of the advantages of smart meters. We’re also talking about how, as a critical one, it provides an opportunity for consumers to shift their consumption to the times that they feel are most appropriate. Contrary to some people’s characterization that it’s forcing people to do it when they don’t want to do it, it’s the times of consumption that they get to choose from. So if you’re talking about real choice, when they make their decision on when they are going to use their power is laid out very clearly for them in the technology that is now available for them to see.

Paul Ferguson, who’s the CEO of Newmarket Hydro, said, “The introduction of smart meters in Newmarket builds the foundation for new advances in the way we use electricity. The old saying ‘You can only manage what you can measure’ has never been more” important.

“The introduction of time-of-use pricing in Newmarket over the past 18 months has seen consumers

begin to shift their consumption from weekdays to weekends, reducing the strain on the electricity system,” which seems to be getting lost in this debate. The prime times in which we’re using our electricity are very, very critical at this time. We’re simply trying to change a culture. If we’re trying to change the culture, we have to change the attitude. What we’re hearing is the same old, same old that allows us to continue to fall back into the same old debate about trying to find out who can mark up who, as opposed to “Let’s find out if we can do this right.”

As we’re doing it right, the problem lies in saying, “We can’t move forward until you can prove to me it’s perfect.” That’s not going to happen. Ask Alexander Graham Bell, who was told, when he invented the telephone, that it was nothing more than a little toy and it wasn’t going to go anywhere, because they didn’t understand the scope of what was being done as it was being invented.

As technology continues to rise, the same people who said that the heart could not be transplanted said the same thing over and over again: “Do not do it. It’s impossible. It’s against the laws of nature. Don’t do it.” But they did it and they moved forward.

I’m suggesting to you in an appropriate way that this motion is basically saying the same kind of thing that the naysayers said before: Don’t move forward, because there’s too many question marks, and—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That was a very disappointing conclusion to his speech. Let me tell you why, and why I’m supporting this resolution by Mr. Yakabuski and why Tim Hudak and the PC caucus will continue to stand up on behalf of Ontario families.

1740

We’re calling on Mr. McGuinty to suspend his smart meter program until the problems with the program’s implementation have been fixed and families in Ontario are given the choice to participate in the time-of-use program or not.

We’re talking about what we can do right—and I’m using a direct quote from the previous speaker, the member from Brant: “What can we do right?” Well, we know, for example, that this government ignored warnings that smart meters were flawed. They didn’t get it right, despite the warnings from members on this side of the chamber.

I can also tell you, anecdotally, when I was first elected in a by-election and these costly and expensive Liberal energy experiments started taking effect back in 2006 after they had taken over the reins of power in 2003, my constituents were calling, very nervous about these smart meters. They thought a few things were happening: one is, their prices were going to go up; the other was that they were going to lose choice and, in some cases, their own freedoms and their own rights.

Guess what’s happened four years later? We know for a fact that prices are going up because of this government, and we know for a fact that people feel they do not

have choice. We see it each and every day. Ontario families are now afraid to open their hydro bills because they know they only go one way, and that way is up. They're not going down. They're going up, and they keep going up. That's why this motion is important for this Legislature, to recognize that Ontario families can no longer afford the McGuinty Liberal government.

As many people here know, I'm on the Twitter and other social media. Today I put a call out: "Let me know what you think." I went and looked on my Twitter for different buzzwords, whether it was "smart meters" or "hydro." Here are some of the comments.

"You have to do laundry at 10 p.m. to save money." They can tell that mother she's wrong, like they're trying to tell this mother.

They say, "This elected official"—and by that, I think they mean Mr. McGuinty—"redefines the free world." It goes to that attitude of anti-choice that this government has.

They also say, "We live in a northern climate. We can't use the clothesline in January. I expected a jump by my energy, but I didn't expect a 50% jump. I'm not impressed."

These are some of the comments that are coming from Ontarians.

The reality is, this Liberal government run by Dalton McGuinty is out of touch. They have lost sight of the importance of everyday Ontarians. They don't get it, or they don't care, or they're so wrapped up in their own ideology that they don't want to fix a problem that they knew existed as they forced these smart meters on Ontarians. They knew full well that their so-called smart meter plan was botched, but they still continue to go ahead, full steam.

That's why our caucus is calling on Dalton McGuinty to suspend the smart meter program until the billing problems are fixed, so that we can let Ontario families decide if they want this program or not.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I look forward to hearing from our critic Mr. Yakabuski, as he concludes this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to, I believe, end this debate today on my opposition day motion, which is essentially asking the government to suspend the smart meter time-of-use program until the problems associated with it can be fixed.

I heard the member from Brant say earlier that he wants us to be more specific with the problems. Well, they know of the problems. The Minister of Energy knows of the problems. He knows what his own utilities have told him. He knows what 21 utilities have told him about the fact that this is impossible to—that it's wrong-headed to rush this through, that they don't have time to get this done and have all the bugs ironed out in time for this program.

They're doing it because you're telling them to do it, because the Premier's telling you to tell them to do it. That's how it works. It's all politically motivated. The

program is racked with problems, and they need to fix them.

The Premier talked about other jurisdictions. Let's get a couple of things clear. This party, the PC Party of Ontario, under our leader, Tim Hudak, is very much in tune and on board and in favour of conservation as a way to reduce energy usage in this province. We in no way, shape or form oppose technology. What we oppose is when the government tries to rush something through when it's not working, it is shown to be not working, and is only there in transience and stubbornness that will not allow them to take a step back and take a breath. Because the problem is, it's a political plan, and that's all they want to stick with.

The Premier talks about other jurisdictions that have smart meter programs in place or are planning to implement them. He talks about British Columbia and California; the member for Brant talked about Governor Schwarzenegger, Florida, New York and Illinois. But the fact is that each and every one of those jurisdictions offers people a choice, a choice about whether or not to be part of the time-of-use pricing. They're saying, "How do you do that?" Well, that is what's in place right now. There are all kinds of jurisdictions throughout the province that are already on time-of-use pricing. My brother is on it in Owen Sound. Most of the places in the province are not on it yet. So for them to say you can't run a hybrid system is patently false. They're doing it now. What we have suggested is that the people in Ontario should have this choice because there are many people who can't shift their load. The agricultural industry—if you find a way where you can tell those cows when and when not to produce milk and make sure they only produce it in the off-peak times, you let me know, I say to the Minister of Energy. If you can tell the small business who has a clientele that is only a day-time clientele—a restaurant business or whatever—to shift his time of use to the middle of the night, we'd love to hear that, Mr. Minister. But you know you can't.

There are some people who cannot shift their loads. There are families who work shift-work who cannot shift their loads. We're suggesting that you give those people a choice so that they can make the determination: "Does this smart meter program, does this time-of-use pricing work for me or does it not?" For some people it will work, but for an awful lot of people it will not, and we're suggesting that you give them a choice. For the person who examines their own usage and says, "You know what? This timetable is something that is doable for myself and my family," they have a choice. Let them have the smart meter running on time-of-use programming and let them accrue any benefits, if there are some; and if there are not, they'll know soon enough.

But for those people who have already determined, because of the style they live, because of the job they have, because of the business they run, because of the fact that they raise dairy cattle or do other agricultural jobs, that they cannot shift that load, they cannot shift that time-of-use, then we're saying, give them a choice. It's a very simple motion. It is a very doable motion, and

I would hope that those members from the opposition who want to talk about really making real change, positive change for the people using energy in this province, which is everybody—this is an opportunity for them to stand up and say it's not always politics; it's not always ideologically driven. Sometimes it's about doing the right thing for the people in this province. I thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time has expired.

Mr. Yakabuski has moved opposition day number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine

Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim
Jones, Sylvia
Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario

Miller, Norm
Murdoch, Bill
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those opposed will please rise.

Nays

Balkissoon, Bas
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Carroll, Aileen
Chiarelli, Bob
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael

Hoskins, Eric
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kular, Kuldip
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mauro, Bill
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Murray, Glen R.

Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 21; the nays are 43.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

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Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
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Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

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Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Elliott, Christine (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Oakville Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP) Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina Cambridge London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

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Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
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Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
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Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakubuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Gouvernement
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Mercredi 29 septembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 29 September 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 29 septembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY TAX CREDIT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR LES ACTIVITÉS DES ENFANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 22, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit / Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour les activités des enfants.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to provide a few further remarks on the child tax credit.

As I listened to the government yesterday talking about the fact that they are now going to look at seniors and the energy bills, it seemed to me that the most recent flurry of activity by this government has been government by sectors: Who gets a piece of the action in this case? Who gets a tax credit?

In the spring, we debated the northern Ontario tax credit. While no one is going to say someone doesn't deserve a tax credit, the reality is that it becomes a bit disingenuous when you have a sector where you decide, oh, this group needs something and now this group needs something. It seems to me that we often talk about government on the back of an envelope or a napkin, but it seems as if that's what we're viewing here as well because of the fact that tax credits are a relatively inexpensive method by which the government can curry favour with the recipients. It provides an opportunity to go out and speak to the virtues of the activity that in fact are being recognized through this tax credit.

We know statistically that a relatively small number of people actually go through the process of keeping their invoices and bills and remembering at the right time to fill out their tax return in the appropriate manner. We also know that it's a small token, a very small token, of the cost of providing these kinds of activities for children

in this particular case. It seems as if it's very hard to look at this without the kind of cynicism that I've suggested: that the government has decided who the winners are and who the losers are in this lottery of who gets tax credits. As I say, in theory, of course there's nothing wrong with recognizing it. I think, though, that the timing demonstrates a certain reaction of the government and so does who they choose to be the winners and the losers in this lottery of who gets a tax credit and for what.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to respond to my friend the member from York-Simcoe's comments. Certainly, this is not a bad thing, but when you consider that the HST on about \$500 worth of children's activities is \$40 already, it's not much of a good thing either. I'll be speaking at some length about this a little later.

Suffice to say that we're looking at a credit of about \$75 million on the average expense across the province of about \$150 million. So really, this is paying back the voter with their own money and not giving all of it back, either. It's certainly a credit that's going to go to middle-class and upper-middle-class families far more frequently than it will go to lower-middle and lower-class families and the poor because of the way that it has been instituted, and I'll speak about that as well.

But let's face it: At its hub, this is an election ploy. This is the first of many election ploys; we've seen another coming out just this week. Over and over again you'll see this government essentially giving back a small amount of what they're taking from the electorate in the way of the HST. We're going to see more of this, I'm sure.

Is it a good thing? Will we vote for it? Of course we will. Is it enough? Absolutely not. We have families that are struggling, that can't pay the rent and feed their children. We have families across this province that have to choose whether their children are in extracurricular activities or not, all because of the HST. We proposed taking it off the hydro bills. That's significant. Had they proposed taking it off children's activities, that might have been more significant as well.

I look forward to speaking more about this. I commend the member for her comments. Shame on this government for the little that it is doing.

0910

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to rise this morning to make some comments on the speech from the member from York-Simcoe.

We have been debating this now for a while. This credit was part of something that we talked about in the past, and I keep on hearing, "It's not enough. It's not enough." I would urge the members across the aisle to tell us what is enough.

We talk about this partially giving back the HST that is being collected. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say to you that they need to be fair to their constituents and to Ontarians by telling the whole story, because part of the tax reform, which includes the HST, meant a substantial reduction in personal income tax, and it meant the reduction for low- or no-income families—a PST rebate that they never had before that they will get every three months. They need to talk about the child benefit that this government introduced a couple of years ago that means over \$1,000 per child per year if they qualify. They're not saying that.

I would say to the members opposite that—you know what?—there are challenging times. I'm not sure there's anybody out there, regardless of what income, who's not facing some challenging times. That's not unique to Ontario; it's not unique to Canada. It's unique to the world. The majority of the economists in Canada, and probably in the world, are telling us that the steps that Ontario has taken are probably the right steps.

This is one of those things that—we're cognizant that raising families is challenging. It was challenging when I had four little kids. But this is another one of those steps that helps those families meet those daily requirements.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: First of all, Bill 99 and yesterday's Bill 109 are an admission of guilt by Premier McGuinty: guilt that they've hit the tax ceiling on the people of Ontario. We heard that from the New Brunswick election, that they also recognized that Liberal governments have a predictable history of tax and spend—in excess, really.

When I look at this bill, I say that, fundamentally, it's sort of like social engineering. Premier McGuinty, in all fairness, is doing it with the children and those young families that can't afford to register for hockey, and yesterday he did it with the seniors. He's giving them a tax credit. Again, an admission of guilt—too much tax. He's picking off focus groups so that he can try to swing their vote back, because he's losing the confidence of the people of Ontario. I don't know what has happened to the Premier. He was always such a nice guy, sort of like Ward Cleaver. But my point is this: You are, as the member from York-Simcoe said, really picking them off.

What I think you could do is accomplish two things in this Bill 99 that would help all the people of Ontario. First of all, you could, for instance—a friendly amendment to the House leader—actually extend this to seniors who register for a program in tai chi. Think of the quality of life that you would be offering them: a tax break for the HST they'd be paying on a physical fitness program, a wellness program, a program on nutrition, a program on using medications wisely. These are extensions that could

easily be extended to seniors with very little cost, but it would show a sign of sympathy and compassion for a group of citizens who are no longer able to afford to live in Ontario under Premier McGuinty.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm delighted to rise and add a few comments about this.

I want to say to the good people of Ontario that there is an existing federal credit, and the nature of that credit is that it helps save income tax if you owe income tax. But there are many people in Ontario, those with the least, who don't actually pay income tax. Under our proposal, this credit goes to people whether or not they actually owe income tax.

I want to thank the minister for bringing this measure in, because it ensures that there is a certain amount of equity on this to make sure that children, and particularly the parents who are paying for these programs, receive a benefit. And it is not just restricted to those who are in the middle class and above, because it's important for all of our children to be able to participate.

That's why I'd say to our friends in the federal government that they may want to consider changing their model to more reflect the progressive piece of tax policy we have here in Ontario, which ensures that all people who support their children by way of enriching their lives are able to receive the benefit of this important new tax credit.

The other thing I would commend to the federal government, and something I'm very proud of as a member of our government, is that we've gone beyond sports. As someone who, growing up, was an athlete and also a musician, I remember how much money my parents spent for me to have my music lessons. So I'm delighted by the fact that those young people now have the ability, with the support of our tax base, to ensure that they're broadening those activities that are so important to children. Again I would say to our friends in the federal government that this is something we think they should consider as well.

I think we've taken a new leadership position in Confederation on this matter, and we look forward to the federal government following our progressive lead on this—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for York-Simcoe, you have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'd like to thank the members from Parkdale-High Park, Northumberland-Quinte West and Durham, and the Minister of the Environment for their thoughtful comments.

I would just say, in the moments I have, that I'd like to take up the challenge provided to me by the member for Northumberland-Quinte West, who says that we say "Not enough," and what answer I have to that. Well, the answer is very, very simple. The member referred to the challenging times in which we live. I don't think there is anyone who would not agree. But I think the difference on the two sides of the House is that so much of the chal-

lenging times in which we live has been provided to us thanks to the government and its responses.

Obviously, the eHealth scandal comes to mind, and the scandal that the OLG provided to us a few years ago, which, by the way, we're going to learn more about in 45 minutes—chapter 2 on the OLG and the scandals that rock it.

The local health integration networks have demonstrated themselves to be ineffective as carriers of money and as being able to work within their communities, maybe partly because of "local." When you've only got 14 in the province, it's a demonstration of a definition of "local" that few of us would agree with.

So, in other words, what I have to say to the member across is that many of the things that have made Ontario's challenging times greater are because of what the government has done.

By taking the HST and not making any kind of accommodation with provincial—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents and the folk of Ontario to speak to government Bill 99.

First of all, for those who are watching at home, you should know that what this does is provide up to \$50 for each child for household spending on children's activity programs. It's designed as a 10% credit on spending up to \$500. It's rebatable if you don't pay income tax. That's the gist of it.

The context in which this bill is brought forward, however, is very different. Again, to go back to the comments by the member from Northumberland—Quinte West, the challenge of how would we do it better: Quite frankly, we on this side of the House and in the New Democratic Party would have done it better by not introducing in the first place a regressive flat tax like the HST for which we have to provide subtle corrections.

This is an extremely subtle correction for an extremely big tax grab. That's what is happening here. By best-guess estimates of economists, the average HST tax grab on family recreation will be about \$150 million. This gives back about half of that.

The HST alone on \$500 a year is \$40, so really it's only \$10 a year they get back—I mean, \$10. Considering the grab on hydro rates, the not-so-smart meters, the HST itself and its impact, this is pretty small. I mean, this is pretty niggling. I can tell you, on behalf of my constituents, that they are suitably underwhelmed.

0920

For one thing, we know—this is a fact; this has been proven in government studies. I point to the study done in Alberta, which shows that any tax credit you have to keep all your receipts for and then apply for at the end of the year is much more likely to be taken up by middle-class and upper-middle-class families than it is by working-class families and lower-income people—much more likely. First of all, there's that. Quite frankly, very few people are even going to apply for it. Those who

apply for it are going to get very little back out of the huge tax grab that's going to be asked of them. This is in a province where we have one in six children living in poverty.

Many of the families in my riding would love to be able to take music and ballet lessons. They'd love to be able to take after-class lessons of any sort, including tutorials to help them with what they're not getting in the classroom. Again, we're dealing with classroom teachers who are overwhelmed with workloads. There's a lack of adults to help them. There are families across Ontario—the family bite to raise money just to keep the educational system going is about \$600 million a year.

I just went to the ribbon cutting for a playground in one of my public schools. It cost the parents \$50,000. When I was in school, we didn't have to raise money like that just to pay for public education. This HST is on top of everything else that is besieging families with children today in the province of Ontario. Really, when you see the big picture in which Bill 99 sits, it's a pretty small recompense.

I could go on; I could talk about the lack of daycare in this province, that it costs the average family at least \$1,000 per child, and that's if they're lucky enough to get a space.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I know that the member for Parkdale—High Park, when she's going on, will not want to go too far from the bill we are discussing this morning.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Never would I do that. I am taking what the member from Welland would call a scenic route to get back to Bill 99, the children's activity tax credit.

We are speaking about the children's activity tax credit, an amount up to \$50 and, by the way, lest I be corrected, \$100 provided to a child with a disability. Rather than this, the folk in my community who have children with disabilities at home would beseech the government to please take the HST off hydro rates, because they're at home with their children with disabilities all day. They have a far larger share of their hydro being used during the day, especially if there are machines involved—oxygen machines and whatnot—in trying to keep their children or family members healthy. So this is little salve to families with disabilities.

My families with children with disabilities would prefer increases to Passport funding. That would be nice, because they don't know what they're going to do with their children once they finish high school. I have a number of families who have children—one family in particular—in a wonderful high school, Lucy McCormick, which deals with children with disabilities in my riding. Their child is about to graduate. What then? Where is the help then? They've been here several times sitting in the visitors' gallery. They've been asking for help for their children with disabilities. I'm telling you, please, this isn't enough. This isn't enough—not even close. Not even remotely close, particularly considering the bite of the HST generally.

We in the New Democratic Party are not anti-tax. We're not. We are anti flat, regressive taxes. The HST is a flat, regressive tax. What do I mean by that? A flat tax taxes poor and lower-income people proportionately more than upper-income people and middle-class people. That's why we oppose it. It's not a fair tax.

Interjections.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: There is such a thing as a fair tax, my friends across the aisle. There is such a thing. This is not it. The way to correct an unfair tax is not by giving people back a soupçon of what they pay out to you, just before an election. That's not the answer to a regressive flat tax; it really isn't. But that is, in effect, what Bill 99 does.

When I say "fair taxes," the New Democratic Party is also against giving away the people's money—and it is the people's money, our constituents' money—to the tune of \$2 billion a year to corporate tax breaks at a time when people are struggling, at a time when people in my riding are struggling.

I received a letter from a young woman. She's a ministry candidate. She does pulpit supply, she teaches music and she takes in lost and stray animals; she feeds them and fosters them. She said that the difference to her hydro rate and the difference in terms of HST have made it impossible for her to feed her animals and feed herself on what she brings in.

We're talking here about people with very little income: seniors who are on fixed incomes. G99, the children's tax credit, is not going to help the seniors in my riding who are opening up their hydro bills and are appalled by what they see—and neither will your seniors' credit, by the way.

We have asked you to take the HST off hydro—a very simple request—and you won't. You won't.

Interjections.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The Minister of the Environment, who's heckling me, seems not to understand that the HST, as a regressive flat tax, hurts the poor and middle-income and fixed-income people more. It simply does; all flat taxes do. That's really undebatable. I mean, that's just a fact, right? Progressive taxes: different matter.

But to get back, because I want to get back to Bill 99, the children's activity tax credit, which gives \$50 back if you spend \$500—and keep all your receipts, mind you—on your children's recreation; that's after-school programming. Whereas we know that families, just in HST alone, spend \$150 million a year on their children's recreation, this will give them back \$75 million. It basically takes a dollar and gives them back 50 cents. That's what this credit does, at best. That's if people apply for it.

To rehash what I was saying, we've been shown by study after study that this kind of tax rebate, where you have to keep your receipts, is much, much more likely to be applied for by middle-class and upper-middle-class families than it will be by working-class families or lower-class families. They won't take advantage of it, and even if they do, they'll get very little back for the

amount of money they're paying out. Again, that's an undebatable point.

Again, to go back, the member from Northumberland—Quinte West asked what we in opposition would do better. Whoa. It's a challenge; I've only got 10 minutes left. We've had a government that has been in place for seven years, so it's seven years to cover here, but let's just try. Let's end this on a positive note.

What would we suggest? First and foremost, we would suggest—and we have—that you take the HST off the hydro rates. There you go. That would help families. That would help families that cook dinners at 6 o'clock, that run their laundry, that look after their seniors, that look after their children with disabilities during the day. That would help families.

What could you do? Hey, you could look at a daycare program. We've long been advocating that in the New Democratic Party. They have one in Quebec; they have it in other places—Manitoba, for \$17 a day; \$6, \$7 a day in Quebec. Here, \$1,000-plus a month, if you can find a space. You could do that.

You could maybe fund the public education system so that parents didn't have to raise \$600 million a year in fundraising just to keep the public education system going. You could do that.

Passport funding: My folk have been asking, "Where is the Passport funding for our children?" You could do that and a myriad of other moves.

0930

Quite frankly, the problem of tax credits for people who enrol their children in recreational programs—it's something that many families in my riding wish they could do. They wish they had the \$500 to put out, on top of everything else, to enrol their children in extra-curricular activities. They wish they had that: people who are living on social assistance, people who are living on ODSP, people who are living on minimum wage. These folk in my riding—from around the world, because, face it, in south Parkdale, we have 65 mother tongues spoken in our high schools. People from around the world, some working two or three jobs just to get by, wish they had the \$500 extra to spend on extracurricular activities so that they could collect this credit in the first place. This isn't speaking to them. I get it. In fact, it's very rare that this government does speak to them, except perhaps on ODSP to claw back the special diet allowance, which is the most egregious act I think I've witnessed in a long time in this place.

But even for middle-class families that have the wherewithal to think to keep all their receipts, who want to put those receipts in, who want to do the right thing and get every tax credit that's coming to them, this won't come close to matching the HST bite that they're going to be paying for recreational activities for their children. Anybody here who has had children, who has put them in ballet or music lessons or anything else, knows that you're spending at least \$30 a week on those lessons—at least \$30 on those lessons. Five hundred dollars a year? It's not going to go far. A \$50 tax credit when actually

your HST bite will be way more than that is not going to help very much, particularly in an environment where you're being hit by higher hydro bills, where you're being hit every time you go to the store. Particularly in that environment, this is pretty small.

Are we going to support it? Of course, because anything is better than nothing. This is like a mantra on this side of the House. Anything is better than nothing, even when it's crassly put forward in the year before an election when the polls are falling and everybody on the government side knows that people out there hate the HST, don't want to pay it and are hurting. Even when it's crassly put forward, even then, we in opposition will support it, because anything is better than nothing. Quite frankly, for my families, they are desperate enough that anything is better than nothing, but it ain't enough. It's not enough. It's not nearly enough.

The message I would like to leave with those across the aisle is simply the message that comes to us in letters every day, and I know it comes to you, too: You, who care about your constituents, who care about those people in your ridings who are suffering, who can't make ends meet and who just can't take another hit, know as well as I do that this isn't enough.

I trust that you will be working with your cabinet, and I trust that you will be trying to get your Premier and leader Dalton McGuinty's ear. I trust you'll be trying to do that to really make the case for those like the woman I brought before you who can't feed her animals and herself anymore; the seniors who can't pay their taxes, who can't pay their hydro bills, who may lose their houses and have to go into a residence because of the extra bite on their hydro bill.

Perhaps you will bend the ears of your cabinet members so that your constituents will also have a voice—the same voice they used to speak to us. We hear it. We hear it and we bring it here. We have lost track of the tens of thousands of emails that we have received about the state of the province of Ontario—everything from post-secondary education to the special diet allowance. You name it; people can't pay it. They can't pay it anymore. And \$50 is not going to cut it as recompense for that.

I hope, for your sake, but really more for your constituents' sake, that you will not speak with one voice across the floor but that you'll break rank and speak on behalf of your constituents for a change, because that's what is needed here. We don't need rank partisanship in this place. People and the electorate of Ontario have no patience for that anymore. They would like to see real action from the government—for which we, in the opposition, would support you—on behalf of their constituents who are hurting, who can't pay the bills and who are driven more and more to the use of food banks because they can't pay this extra bite. It's just that extra bite that makes all the difference. This little, tiny recompense—\$50 back to the people who are hurting the most, those with families—isn't the answer.

This is seen, by my constituents anyway, and I'm sure by some of yours, as a cynical pre-election ploy. Again,

we are voting for it because this little bit of something is better than nothing. Hopefully we will hear from those across the aisle that they are in agreement and that they are in agreement with their constituents that far more is needed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The minister of innovation—I'm still having trouble with that.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Research and Innovation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Minister of Research and Innovation; thank you. I won't make that mistake again.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I stand here very proudly as a member of this Liberal government when it comes to children. A \$50 tax credit leveraged against a federal tax credit is, for many working families, real money in my constituency. But they don't look at it as if the only thing the government is doing is giving them a tax break.

Day-long learning, in my community—and when I listened to the member from High Park-Parkdale, I was wondering what city she lived in. Day-long learning is an unprecedented commitment to children and families. This is a government that also underwrote the loss and federal withdrawal by the Conservative Party of 8,500 child care spaces. Day-long learning—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister of Research and Innovation, I remind you that the questions and comments relate to the speech of the member from Parkdale-High Park.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Day-long learning, replacing federal cuts to child care, a \$1,200 child tax benefit, recreational activities like music and art—I could mention many more; I only have 45 seconds.

I don't know of a government in Canada that is doing that kind of work. The \$50 in that context is very good. It's very rich coming from parties opposite that have done full-frontal assaults on childcare, nearly left 8,500 children without daycare, and a party who can't match that record. It's just a little rich.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The Minister of Research and Innovation didn't even use the 45 seconds; that's how much he has to say on this topic.

My point is this: The member from Parkdale-High Park I think speaks with reasoned and considered passion, and makes informed comments with respect to this, like most of the comments that she makes in this House as a pastor and a person of deep spiritual conviction.

But the issue here really comes down to—first of all, some of the members on the government side don't really understand the bill. First of all, you get the money whether you pay income tax or not. Secondly, you have to spend \$500 to get the \$50 credit. When you spend \$500, you're actually spending about \$40 in HST. So they're giving it back, plus you have to file for it; you have to keep the receipts. It's full of red tape and you get a measly \$6 back. That's what would actually go in your jeans—\$6.

We are trying to be reasonable here this morning. We will move a friendly amendment with your indulgence, and that would include seniors. Seniors should be entitled to an active tax credit as well. Imagine seniors who may have osteoporosis or who want to take a fitness or a walking program for their health and their own quality of life. Why should they be burdened with an HST when they're trying to avoid costs to the health care system? It's a simple thing here: Extend it to seniors.

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The minister of innovation has the right to speak for 20 minutes here on this topic. I'm very passionate about this. It is a very tokenistic amount. It's populist politics at its worst. Even yesterday, they tried to trivialize seniors by giving them—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's tragic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I am so glad that I have an opportunity to respond to the comments made by my colleague, because she's right. What you've got is a provincial government that is out of control when it comes to taxing and imposing user fees on the average person on the street. They're trying to find ways to soften the impact so that when the election happens a year from now, they'll be able to say, "Oh, yeah, we raised your taxes with the HST. Oh, yes, we raised your hydro bill. Oh, yes, we had property taxes go up because of the things that we've done. But don't worry. We're going to give you some tax credits that will make it all go away."

But the reality is, I think, that people see two things. One, it's a government desperate to hold on to power, which quite frankly has done some things that are quite wrong, and it's trying to figure out how it can soften the impact on the electorate. The other thing is that I don't think the public is buying it. I think the public understands that this government has made some pretty bad decisions, and at the end of the day, all the tax credits that you want to give in regard to, in this case, the child activity tax credit or the one that was announced yesterday, are not going to buy the love of the voter in the next election. I think people see it for what it is. This government, quite frankly, is a government that has been—to excess—into the pockets of hard-working people, and people are fed up.

If you see what's happening in the mayoralty campaign today in the city of Toronto, with Rob Ford, that's what this is all about, and this government hasn't figured it out. People are hopping mad—it's as simple as that—and they're tired of having their pockets picked. People are saying, "Enough is enough. We need to have some civility when it comes to how our governments treat us."

To my friend the minister across the way who talks about the stellar record of this government when it comes to daycare: Listen, I was a member of a government that expanded daycare to unprecedented numbers in this province. I take no lecture from the member across the

way, who tries to say his government did something on daycare, because, quite frankly, it doesn't measure up to what we did in five years in government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm very pleased to support this act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. If you have a conversation, take it outside.

Mr. Phil McNeely: On page 2 of the act, which I have here—this is the first time that the federal program did not include these—are music, dramatic arts, dance, activities with a substantial focus on wilderness and the natural environment.

I've always felt that there was a difficulty for dancers, who provide such great physical fitness in their programs, whether it's step-dancing, Highland dancing or the other dancing that we see in our communities. We have a lot of that in Orléans, yet there's no help for them. They provide their own space. So this is great. This is a step forward. Unlike the federal tax credits, we are including these excellent activities in this program.

The other activity that I'm very pleased to see as well is the natural environment—"a substantial focus on wilderness and the natural environment." In our riding, we have a program spirit—Sunshine families, and of course we've also got all the Scout groups. This program will help them. The dollars will be there to help them grow their programs and really offer programs to our children which are very important, especially today when we have all the issues around water pollution and air pollution. We will be able to get our kids out on the Ottawa River in Orléans. They'll be able to use those programs. This will help. This will grow the number of kids who can participate. I'm very pleased that our government has come forward with this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Parkdale—High Park, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to rise and to respond to the members who have made comment, particularly my friend who's the Minister of Research and Innovation.

The challenge that this government has a stellar record on children is, quite frankly, laughable. If you just compare our neighbours Quebec and Manitoba—one has child care for about \$7 a day; the other, child care for about \$17 a day—my families would love to have that here, and don't.

The simple response to the comments from across the aisle is this: Why are families so angry, then, if this is such a gift? If this is such a gift, why do I hear at the door that to spend \$500 and get \$6 back, as the member from Durham mentioned, is really not much of a gift at all, that in fact they're spending way more and that many of them can't even afford the \$500 a year to receive the credit at all. And we know that even if they spend it, they have to

save their receipts, and they probably won't claim it. We've seen studies that have shown that.

This is simply a ploy, and everyone sees it as such. They see it as trying to make up some ground that has been lost, and they're angry. They're angry at this government. You see it in the polls, you see it at the door, you see it in the malls, and you see it in the schools: Families are angry. They can't afford it anymore. Not only families; seniors and single parents, who are just struggling to get by. We have in this province one in six children living in poverty. It's an unprecedented level of poverty we haven't seen since the Great Depression. And this government crows about how wonderful they've been for children? Please. Methinks they speak too much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Do we have a quorum?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is there a quorum present?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It is indeed a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to speak on Bill 99 this morning, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit, brought forward by my colleague the Minister of Finance, Mr. Duncan.

I would be remiss this morning—just to put in a plug for Peterborough Day, Mr. Speaker; I know you will give me a little latitude. In room 247 between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. today, there's a good opportunity to see what the riding of Peterborough is all about.

In the members' east gallery today, I would like to introduce a good friend of mine Mr. Jay Amer—Jay, it's good to have you with us—who is a former senior executive for the Greater Peterborough Area Economic Development Corp. He now has his own consulting firm in Peterborough, specializing in airport and manufacturing development. So it's great to have Jay with us today. He's also entering into the political forum. He is a candidate for trustee for the Kawartha Pine Ridge school board, and I know we wish Jay all the best in that endeavour.

I'll get back now to Bill 99, Mr. Speaker. I know you're trying to corral me here.

In the riding of Peterborough, of course, we have a reputation as a great sporting community. Just recently, of course, our Peterborough Lakers senior A lacrosse won their 13th Mann Cup. What is significant about that is that many of the players who play for the Lakers were products of Peterborough's minor lacrosse system, and it's all those volunteers who have spent countless hours to develop young men and women, to introduce them to Canada's national game, lacrosse, to provide those skills necessary to teach them to be part of a team.

This tax credit will certainly facilitate the opportunity for more and more young people in my community to enrol in sports, to take the opportunity to play in one of Canada's great games—and conversely, hockey. We all

know that when you go throughout Canada, the Peterborough Petes are one of the most distinguished junior A hockey franchises in Canada. Indeed like the Peterborough lift lock, the Peterborough Petes are one of those enduring symbols of Peterborough that everybody seems to know about. Again, many of these players who come up to play for the Peterborough Petes have come up through Peterborough's minor hockey system, whether it's the church league or the city league, an opportunity for kids to be enrolled in hockey. Again, this tax credit will facilitate that.

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Just recently we've witnessed that Cito Gaston, the great manager of the Toronto Blue Jays, will be retiring, and Mr. Bautista hitting 52 home runs. Again, there's an opportunity through Peterborough minor league ball to bring our youngest citizens into that organization. It's not a question of whether they'll become professional players in any given sport; it's the opportunity to be part of something, to reach out in a community and make kids part of something, which I think is so very important.

I'll just get a plug in for my own children this morning.

Mr. Mike Colle: You talked about everybody else; you may as well talk about your kids.

Mr. Jeff Leal: My son Braden, who is 12, plays both soccer and basketball. And my daughter, who is 10, Shanae, plays soccer, basketball and hockey.

I had a conversation with many people in early September—you know, you're starting to sign up for the fall sports like basketball and indoor soccer—and many of the parents at the registration desk were saying, "It would be good if the government of Ontario could come forward and give us a little assistance to help us sign our kids up for sports."

I'm pleased that the Minister of Finance has responded to that, but indeed broadened the number of activities that are available. We have aerobics, badminton, ball hockey, baseball, basketball, biking, curling, dodge ball, figure skating, floor hockey, football, golf, gymnastics, hockey, horseback riding, ice skating, karate, kick-boxing and other after-school extracurricular activities such as cadets. We have three cadet corps in Peterborough; we have an army cadet corps, a navy cadet corps and an air force cadet corps. We have chess, we have choir, and something that I probably should have enrolled in many years ago: cooking for kids. We have cardiopulmonary-resuscitation programs, CPR, that I think are very valuable programs for our youngest citizens to be enrolled in. We have crafts, dance, drama, drawing, first aid, gardening for kids, Girl Guides, languages, leadership development, lifeguarding, musical composition and theory, musical instruments, non-medical therapeutic activities for children with a disability, lacrosse, running, skiing, soccer, snowboarding—which is becoming very popular—squash, swimming, tennis, track and field, volleyball, water polo, painting, photography, poetry, public speaking, Scouts; sculpture, sewing, tutoring, voice lessons, and it goes on and on and on.

I think what is so important about this particular credit is that it covers the non-sporting area. We're just in a partnership right now with the government of Canada, the province of Ontario and the city of Peterborough to refurbish the Market Hall in Peterborough. Many of you have had the opportunity to be in Peterborough, on George Street, the main street of Peterborough. The Market Hall, with its great big clock, is one of the enduring symbols of our community. We're spending about \$10 million to renovate Market Hall, and that has been the centre, over many decades, for children's theatre groups. Again, this will encourage parents, guardians and grandparents to enrol individuals in these kinds of programs to experience what life has to offer.

The other thing I'd just like to comment on is something our government did a number of years ago. I believe it was when the member from St. Catharines was the Minister of Tourism. We brought back a program that allowed for dollars to be used to keep gyms open on Saturdays and Sundays. The previous Conservative government just whacked those fees on the weekends, and I heard from basketball groups and indoor soccer groups; they just couldn't pay the dollars that were necessary to rent those gyms on weekends. That was quite sad, because schools are hubs of community activity, particularly my rural high schools in places like Lakefield and Norwood. It was the opportunity to keep those public buildings open on weekends—to provide those dollars, because you have to hire caretakers, usually at time and a half. So these dollars were utilized to keep gyms open, to encourage our young people to participate in programs.

From a preventive health perspective, we want to keep our young people very active. There are a number of reports that have come out over the last number of years indicating that child obesity is becoming a very serious problem in North America. We have the opportunity, I believe, to make sure that our kids stay active in a wide variety of areas. Enrolling them in sports, of course, is a good way of doing this.

Also, one of the things that I particularly think is important is the fact that we're providing \$100 per qualifying child with a disability. Mr. Speaker, I know you've spent time with Community Living in your part of Ontario, in the riding of Essex, and I know one of the things that all members of this House have encountered through meetings with Community Living and other groups within our ridings dealing with children who have disabilities—and we know the unique challenges that presents. So I think one of the really big advantages of this piece of legislation, Bill 99, is that we're providing special recognition for parents or guardians who have children with physical disabilities and an opportunity to allow those citizens in our communities to fully participate in a wide variety of activities. I know this is something that's been acknowledged far and wide as a very positive initiative.

I've listened to the opposition; I've listened to the third party. While there are some concerns that they're legitimately raising, I think this is an opportunity—this

piece of legislation—to have all parties in this House come together to support it. We all want to do what's best for our youngest citizens. As I often say, children represent about 10% of the population but 100% of our future, and anything we can do to keep our kids involved in a wide variety of activities will certainly bode well for the future.

I think what's very important about this piece of legislation is that if you don't qualify to pay income tax in the province of Ontario, you will still receive the benefit. It makes this comprehensive in nature, and recognizes all income groups within the province of Ontario.

The other area that needs some discussion this morning is the impact of the HST. People who are listening to this discussion this morning will know that municipalities can rebate back for GST expenditures. They will also get a rebate back on HST expenditures. I've certainly talked to officials within the city of Peterborough—my former good friend Brian Horton, the director of finance, whom I worked with for many years. There will be the opportunity, as the HST rebate comes back to municipalities—that we will not see some of the, I believe, exaggerated increases that have been talked about in this House in terms of rentals of facilities that are owned and operated by the municipal level of government. I know a report was done for Peterborough city council a number of months ago that actually outlined in detail how the HST rebate back to the city of Peterborough would work and offset any potential costs on ice rentals as long as it's a municipally operated facility.

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We're extremely pleased in Peterborough, along with other communities, because we have an extensive number of arenas in our community. There are also a number of soccer facilities, tennis courts and basketball courts operated by the city of Peterborough. We're really blessed in our community to have these kinds of facilities, and there is an information program going out from the city of Peterborough to inform parents who are enrolling their kids in recreational programs that are utilizing city of Peterborough facilities in terms of rentals.

My friend from Durham is here this morning, and I know he's going to drop by for Peterborough Day. Just to let the House know, the member from Durham played for the Peterborough Petes a number of years ago.

Mr. John O'Toole: Not on the ice.

Mr. Jeff Leal: He learned his minor hockey in Peterborough. He's a good example of someone who came up through the system and played for the Petes. I don't know how long his career was with the Petes—

Mr. John O'Toole: It was about an hour.

Mr. Jeff Leal: About an hour? He thought he was ultimately going to the Toronto Maple Leafs, but—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Yes, that's right; the Montreal Canadiens owned the Petes in those days, but I think that's an example of someone who played minor hockey.

Because my wife is a teacher at St. Catherine's in Peterborough, I have the opportunity to talk to parents

who are enrolling their kids in a whole variety of programs. There is a threshold level of spending of \$500—I recognize that—but between what we're offering and what is offered by the federal government, it indeed does provide some offsets for those costs.

With regard to keeping receipts, a number of the sporting organizations in Peterborough now, as they sign people up, are reminding parents to hold on to those receipts. Indeed, one of the things that worked particularly well was, during the federal home renovation tax credit, Home Depot would actually provide an envelope to customers where they could keep their receipts. So this may be an opportunity for a number of sports organizations—as they sign up young people, they might, in a proactive fashion, provide an envelope to provide safe-keeping for those receipts that one would accumulate as one signs up their youngest citizens.

I note here that the bill is pretty specific. It:

“(a) includes the cost to the qualifying entity of the program in respect of its administration, instruction, rental of required facilities, and uniforms and equipment that are not available to be acquired by a participant in the program for an amount less than their fair market value at the time, if any, they are so acquired, and

“(b) does not include,

“(i) the cost of accommodation, travel, food or beverages,

“(ii) any amount that is an eligible fitness expense,

“(iii) any amount deductible under,

“(A) section 63 of the federal act in computing any person's income for any taxation year, or

“(B) subsection 118.1(3) ... of the federal act in computing any person's tax for any taxation year, or

“(iv) any amount that may be claimed by any person under subsection 102(1) of this act for any taxation year.”

It clearly outlines ineligible activities. It talks about ineligible programs. It talks about qualifying activities. This lays it out pretty clearly. It can't be something that's involved in the normal part of a school's curriculum, but I know that in my area, the schools that are operated by both the separate and public boards have after-school programs that indeed would be eligible for this.

I think this is pretty comprehensive in nature, and I know that if I take the opportunity, and if you have, Mr. Speaker, to chat with your sports organizations in your community and those organizations that have drama and theatre—this is something that's well received.

It may be that we'll perhaps look at some amendments. I know that the member from Durham has mentioned tai chi. That's an activity haven in Peterborough. Certainly at the Mapleridge seniors' centre, there are a number of those citizens who are involved in tai chi. It's a wonderful program. It involves many seniors. Through the committee stage, there's always the possibility to look at these kinds of things.

We do know that keeping our seniors active is crucial. There are many indicators today that keeping seniors active is particularly helpful from a preventive health care perspective.

I don't want to digress too much talking about seniors this morning and not get back to a number of other organizations. The fact that Scouts, Guides, Sparks and Venturers are all included in this shows that we want this tax credit to be very comprehensive in nature, an opportunity to encourage people to sign up for these various groups.

It's interesting too: We're seeing a kind of rebirth of cadet corps in communities. I notice in Peterborough that the army cadet corps is growing. The Navy League, which sponsors navy cadets in Peterborough, is growing, and certainly the air force cadet group is growing. I think there's a renewed interest in pursuing careers in the Canadian Armed Forces. These young pages right here may want to consider serving their country in the Canadian Armed Forces. One of the ways we can instill citizenship in our youngest citizens is by encouraging them to look at cadet corps or Scouts or these kinds of organizations where they get the opportunity to pursue their citizenship badges and really appreciate what the responsibilities of Canadian citizenship are all about.

I see my time is running down. I could probably spend a couple more hours on this piece of legislation, but that's it for today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm finding it hard to respond because not a lot of what the member from Peterborough said had anything to do with Bill 99. But what I do know is that providing this tax credit is a clear admission of guilt on the part of this government and that they got it wrong. Not only that, but by giving the tax credit the government has raised the consciousness of the electorate. They get it. They now know you got it wrong.

What you have to understand as a government is that, first, families have to have the \$500 to spend to get the \$50 back. But with all the increases—layer upon layer of health tax, HST, of whatever is going to come of the eco tax, the absolutely incredible amount of money that people have to pay in their energy bills every month—people are falling short of being able to send their kids to hockey or ballet to get any tax credit back. People have finally woken up to what this government is about.

You know what? This tax is a tax on health promotion. We're trying to keep our kids well rounded and healthy, and this government is taxing them out of that possibility.

While I feel this \$50 is not enough, this government feels like this is the best thing since sliced bread. When will we find this out? We will find it out on October 6, 2011, when all the chickens come home to roost and this government will have to answer for the number of tax increases, fee increases—all the increases they've added—and for handing back money to people that is their own and should have been kept in their pockets in the first place.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I listened to the government and their defence of this particular initiative. Is giving a tax

credit to individuals a bad thing? Absolutely not. But let's see it for what it is. This government has had its hands in the pockets of the people of Ontario for the past eight years. Dalton McGuinty ran, I remember, in the first run-up to the election to his first term on "I will not raise taxes" and put his hand on the pledge and pledged that he would not do so. What is the first thing he does when he gets elected? He imposes the highest tax that citizens have seen in the history of this province, with the health tax premium that was put on people's paycheques, and it's been the same thing all the way through.

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People's hydro bills have gone through the roof. Just recently, there's been an OEB increase on the hydro bill of 9%. The OEB has allowed an 8% increase in the profits of private utilities and public utilities. There has been an HST increase on the hydro bill. So we've got about a 30% increase just in the past six months, and people are saying, "Enough is enough."

And what's the government trying to do? They recognize that they've got a problem. They say, "Jeez, we go back to our constituencies on the weekend and people aren't happy about getting whacked"—not once, not twice, not three times, but four or five times in the last couple of years by this government picking the pockets of people dry. And the government says, well, you know, rather than stopping their ways of picking money out of people's pockets, they've decided that they are going to put forward some of these tax credits. Well, they are what they are. They are an attempt on the part of the government to say, "Look at us. We're dealing with your issue. Don't be mad at us. Re-elect us for a third term." I think it's not in the cards. I think what's clear is that you're starting to see an anger that's palpable in Ontario, because people have caught up to what this government's all about and they're looking, quite frankly, for somebody who is not going to pick their pockets—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased this morning to have an opportunity to speak briefly in support of the comments made by my colleague from Peterborough on Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit.

The part that I want to focus on a bit—I know the member from Peterborough had an opportunity to mention this towards the end of his remarks, and it's probably the piece that I get the most questions or calls about in my riding association office—is how this has the potential to help them when it comes to facilities that are owned by municipalities. We're seeing that a lot of people are feeling that there are going to be significant increases. A lot of people are linking this back to the implementation of the HST, that when their kids enrol, whether it's in a hockey program or whatever it may be that is in a facility that's municipally owned, somehow this is going to have a severe impact on the fees charged by the municipality back to the association using the municipal facilities.

It's important to know and underscore, for those people who are interested in this issue, and I know the member from Peterborough talked about it briefly at the end of his remarks, that when it comes to the implementation of the HST, for municipalities, by and large, I don't think it's incorrect to state that it will be revenue-neutral when it comes to municipalities and the HST. So in fact, when they apply for their rebates, for any costs that accrue to a municipality, they're going to get almost all of those costs back, and therefore any increases in the use of municipally owned facilities, when it comes to offering programs, will be increases only as a result of a municipal decision. They will be unrelated to the implementation of the HST.

This particular tax credit that we're offering is going to further enable parents to enrol their kids in programming: \$500 of eligible expense, up to a \$50 rebate, for those under 16, and \$1,000 of eligible expense for a child with a disability under the age of 18, for a total of perhaps as much as \$100 back on programming that's eligible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

The member for Peterborough, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge the comments from my colleagues from Burlington, Timmins–James Bay and Thunder Bay–Atikokan to my remarks this morning.

We're all in ridings and we all have the opportunity to look at minor sports organizations, and people who are involved in Cubs and Scouts and Venturers and Sparks and all those kinds of activities. The volunteers who come forward, year in and year out, the individuals who take their time to share their life experience, to share their skills, to share their leadership qualities with the next generation, is something that is very important to us all, because we need to remind ourselves, the 107 of us who are in this chamber, that there will be a new generation—we're probably looking at some of them in our pages just today—who will take these seats. One of the ways that they hone their leadership skills over a period of time is to be involved in many organizations within the community.

Bill 99, I believe, is a vehicle to make that happen, to provide a rebate for parents, for guardians signing kids up, be it a sports activity or a non-sports activity, which I think is so important to keep vitality within our communities.

I'd be remiss if I did not recognize in the members' east gallery Bette Jean Crews, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, who is here at Queen's Park today from the great area of Northumberland. Bette Jean, we give you a hand. It's good to see you. She's a good example of somebody who shows leadership each and every day in our farm community, and a good example of the future leaders.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): My trusty pocket watch would indicate that, pursuant to

standing order 8, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's my pleasure to introduce the parents, brother and grandmother of our page Christopher Millar. We have with us Eric and Maureen, his parents; Scott, his brother; and grandmother Marion. Please welcome them to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to introduce the grandparents of page Thomas Davidson, who lives in Ottawa Centre. Ross Davidson and Doris Davidson are here, who live in the great riding of Don Valley West, represented by Minister Wynne.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm sure that many of the members of the Legislature are aware of the great breakfast that was served this morning in the dining room by the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition. They provided it to us to make a presentation on the state of agriculture in the province of Ontario. The president and chair of the committee is in the gallery today, Bette Jean Crews.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Well, I'll tell you, this is Bette Jean's day today. I also am so pleased to be able to recognize Bette Jean, who is the president of the OFA, and I just want to thank her for all the tremendous work that she does on behalf of agriculture. Thank you very much, Bette Jean.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my pleasure as well to welcome to the Legislature, from the Ontario duty-free association, Ms. Tania Lee and Mr. Peter Brain from my riding of Sarnia-Lambton. They will also be joined by Mr. Guy Langevin, Mr. Chris Foster and Mr. Jeff Butler, representing all the duty-free stores across Ontario. There's also a reception today from 11:30 to 2:30 in room 228.

Mr. Jeff Leal: This being Peterborough Day, I invite everybody to room 247 between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

In the members' east gallery, we have the reeve of Douro-Dummer and the warden of Peterborough county, Mr. J. Murray Jones. His claim to fame is that he was in elementary school with the member from Pickering-Scarborough East. So there we go.

Mr. Steve Clark: It gives me great pleasure to introduce representatives from the Ontario East Wood Centre and Eco-Industrial Park, located in the township of Edwardsburgh/Cardinal. I'd like to introduce Sandra Lawn, the project leader, who is also the former mayor of the town of Prescott; Councillor Hugh Cameron from the township of Edwardsburgh/Cardinal; and Michael Wildman, the chief administrative officer from the township of Edwardsburgh/Cardinal. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John O'Toole: With your indulgence, I'd like to introduce in the visitor's gallery Doris and Ross Davidson, who are from Toronto. They're here to celebrate here with their grandson Tom Davidson, one of the pages, who is the lead today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters say that your expensive energy experiments, tax grabs and smart meter tax machines will add some \$732 a year more to hydro bills that Ontario families pay. Last week during question period, you said that you did not believe their numbers. I suppose this is part of your more intelligent understanding of the issues than the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters'. Premier, if you don't take their numbers at face value, can you then please tell the assembly and families in Ontario exactly how much more hydro bills are going up?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: During the course of the past few days, we've been having a very important discussion about electricity, electricity rates and the commitment that we've made as a government to act responsibly and invest in the modernization of a dilapidated electricity system.

My colleague opposite maintains that he stands four-square against smart meters, so I want to remind him of some of the things said by representatives of his party in this regard. The member for Durham said the following: "I believe you should be focusing" on "providing tools to consumers like interval meters and time-of-rate meters in their homes so that they can actually determine when to shut off the air conditioner, the television, the freezer and other appliances that are high consumers, like hot water heaters."

One day they're in favour of smart meters; when it suits their fancy, they're not. I think Ontarians want to know: Where do they actually stand when it comes to important issues like the rehabilitation of electricity in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Ontario PCs stand for choice, to give families the option of whether they want to participate in time of use that would actually encourage conservation, or not. Just like in British Columbia, just like in California, just like in Florida, Illinois and other jurisdictions, we think families can make the best choice, as opposed to Premier Dad across the way, who knows what's best for the rest of Ontario families.

Let me ask the Premier a question that he dodged the first time around. The Ontario Energy Board recently wrote a letter to the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. After originally denying that they had any forecasts of hydro rate increases, their letter backtracks and says, "Board staff has in fact conducted a preliminary analysis and forecast of electricity costs." Premier, you have the report. Will you make it public today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it's important that we continue to help Ontarians understand where the Conservatives try to be at different times. In their 2007 campaign document *Energy for the Future*, co-authored by the MPPs for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Carleton-Mississippi Mills and Durham, they said Ontario should

“invest in conservation—to offset demand” and “demand management—to shift peaks in consumption to off-hours.”

Again, one day they're in favour of something; one day they're against something. I think what Ontarians want to know is: What do they actually stand for?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know, Premier, that you are obviously refusing to answer my very direct question. You can choose to answer it here during question period, you can choose to answer to the media, but Premier, you need to come clean and answer this question.

The Ontario PC caucus has uncovered a letter from the Ontario Energy Board that acknowledges that they've done the study of exactly how much more energy costs are going to go up for Ontario families. You have chosen to bury it. You refuse to release the Ontario Energy Board's study on how much rates are going to go up for Ontario families.

Premier, you have changed. What's with this secrecy? Why won't you come clean? Answer the question Ontario families are asking. Release that report. How much more are hydro bills going to go up under Dalton McGuinty?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please. I just remind the honourable members that it is important for all of us to hear the questions that are asked and the answers that are given. I found it difficult to hear the question that was just being asked and I also, on the previous answer from the Premier, had some difficulties listening to the answer. I would just remind members on both sides to be respectful to all members.

Premier?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think what we've uncovered here is the flipping and flopping of the Conservative Party, flipping and flopping like a freshly landed pickerel in northern Ontario on a hot August afternoon. It's not a pretty sight. There's lots of energy but there's not a lot of light coming from that.

I want to quote one other important representative of the Conservative Party, and that is the former Ontario Minister of Energy, John Baird, who said the following: “If we could get everyone in the province to turn their dishwasher on in off-peak hours and do their washing in off-peak hours, that would have a huge consequence.”

One day they're in favour of smart meters; another day they're against smart meters. I think what Ontarians really want to know is where they stand when it comes to electricity in the province of Ontario.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, three times I've asked you about your buried report from the Ontario Energy Board on how much higher hydro prices are going to go be-

cause of your expensive energy experiments. Three times you refused to answer—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Sorry to interrupt. The Minister of Economic Development will please come to order. I don't need to hear about breakfast.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you have changed. The same kind of secrecy when you buried your sex-ed curriculum that would start sex classes in grade 1—buried it on the Internet—just like we saw how you hid your eco taxes behind the shadow of the HST, just like we saw with your G-20 law that you refuse still to this day to come clean about, you're trying to bury this report of the Ontario Energy Board on how much higher prices are going to go. Why won't you come clean, Premier? Table that report today so Ontario families can see exactly what you're up to.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We have a responsible, transparent, arm's-length relationship with the Ontario Energy Board. That member opposite sat at a cabinet table when they decided to artificially freeze electricity rates. That cost the people of Ontario \$900 million. If you want to talk about dealing with the OEB in a way that is less than responsible, then I would put that forward to my honourable colleague.

He says that he's in favour of families having a choice, so I ask him, did they have a choice when they shut down 28 hospitals, when they fired thousands of nurses, when we lost 26 million school days, when they fired meat and water inspectors, and when they allowed our electricity system to fall into decay? Ontario families had no such choice. We're choosing a responsible electricity future so that when we go to the wall and flick on the switch, the lights will come on.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Four times, Premier, I've asked you the same straightforward question. Your Ontario Energy Board admitted in a letter that the Ontario PC caucus has uncovered that they've done a study of how much higher hydro rates are going to go. I've asked you four times, and four times, Premier, you have refused to answer a simple and direct question. Premier, you have changed. People want straight answers. Tell them how much higher their bills are going to go.

I'll ask you for the fifth time. I hope you give an answer on number five. Will you release that report so Ontario families can see it for themselves?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In addition to sitting on their hands when it came to presiding over the gradual decay of our electricity rates—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: You used to answer questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: He answered one from me once.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And the member from Halton again. That's two times.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In addition to quietly presiding over the gradual decay of Ontario's electricity system, they also, with their "leave it to the next government to take care of" approach, left our children and grandchildren with a \$20-billion stranded hydro debt. Working with Ontarians, we have reduced that debt by \$5.4 billion. But that stranded hydro debt is still costing Ontario families \$60 a year on their energy bill. Again, that speaks to their record of mismanagement when it comes to electricity in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Five times I've asked the Premier of the province a clear, straightforward question: Will you release the Ontario Energy Board report on how much higher prices are going? Five times, Premier, you have refused to answer the question. I don't care if I have to ask you six times, seven times, eight times, nine times or 10 times; we'll drag you kicking and screaming to the truth to make that report public so that Ontario families can see exactly how much higher bills are going to go and how much more you have up your sleeve. Will you release that report today? Will you stand—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. The members will please come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member, you just asked a question and we're about to hear a response.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members from Halton and Durham—and the Minister of Community Safety.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, my honourable colleague is uncomfortable when he's confronted with his record with respect to mismanagement of Ontario electricity. But I think it's important that he be made to revisit that from time to time as he adopts a shifting position with respect to electricity policy today.

Here's the truth: The fact of the matter is that they quietly presided over the gradual decay of the electricity system in the province of Ontario. They refused to make essential investments in new generation and in new transmission. They refused to work with Ontarians so that we might together conserve electricity and reduce demand. They refused to make all those investments, and today that has caught up to us. So now we're making dramatic new investments.

This is the good news: billions of dollars of investments in new generation, in new transmission and in conservation programs. We're creating new jobs at the same time and cleaning up our air. This is good news for Ontarians. There are costs associated with that. We will continue to work with families to help them manage those costs.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Howard Hampton: A question to the Premier: Last year, the Ontario Energy Board held a hearing on changes to the return-on-equity rate for electricity and gas utilities. Independent Canadian experts and consumer and business groups said that no change was needed, but American consultants, paid for by the big utilities, said that Ontario consumers should pay an extra \$240 million a year for their electricity and gas. And what a surprise: Under the Liberal government, the big utilities won.

Today, a number of consumer protection groups are asking the Premier and his government to review the flawed decision of the Ontario Energy Board. My question is this: Will the Premier order that review and save Ontario consumers \$240 million a year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm very disappointed that the NDP would continue to put out information that the Ontario Energy Board, the EDA, Toronto Hydro and other local distribution companies last week clarified to them—they made it very clear to them that their numbers are dead wrong, that their numbers are not incorrect but that they are a gross exaggeration of the facts. To keep spouting out a number that you know is not double the expectation, not triple the expectation, but five times off the impact that the Ontario Energy Board has indicated directly to your leader is wrong, and for you to continue to put that wrong information out is not only incorrect; I think it's totally inappropriate and irresponsible.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'll tell you what's irresponsible: for a McGuinty government to consistently line up behind the big utilities at the expense of consumers and businesses who already can't pay the hydro bills.

This is from the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, an organization that represents consumers who can't pay. They retained economic experts, not a bunch of hacks hired by the big utilities. This is what the independent economists say: "The decision by the Ontario Energy Board is flawed. The decision by the Ontario Energy Board is going to give the big utilities \$240 million a year they don't deserve." The Public Interest Advocacy Centre is asking the McGuinty government, on behalf of low-income consumers: Will you review the flawed decision of the Ontario Energy Board?

Hon. Brad Duguid: What's flawed here is the NDP math. What's flawed here is the lack of responsibility of that party to speak with few true facts—to speak in keeping with the facts. That is a responsibility I think you have; I think it's a responsibility that we all have.

This is a complex calculation. The Ontario Energy Board has issued a clarification of exactly what went into this calculation, and if the member wants to know what the numbers are, I'll tell him: They're five times less than the numbers that his leader was out spouting off about last week, trying to garner headlines on false information. That is totally inappropriate.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Sure, Mr. Speaker, I'll withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: One of the letters I have is from the Consumers Council of Canada, and this is what they say: "The Consumers Council of Canada is very concerned about the decision of the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) to allow utilities to increase their return on equity to 10%."

I gather the McGuinty Liberals think the Consumers Council of Canada is wrong and that only the big utilities are right.

The Consumers Council says this: "The Consumers Council of Canada urges you to review the recent decision of the OEB in the light of the fundamentally flawed process through which this decision was made. Any decision affecting rates requires a proper hearing, which, in turn, allows cross-examination."

I say again: Are the McGuinty Liberals with the big utilities who want to gouge consumers another \$240 million a year, or are you going to listen to the Consumers Council of Canada, who had—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'll tell you one thing we're not going to do: We're not going to take advice from a member who was in a cabinet that raised electricity rates 40% when they were in office. We're definitely not going to take advice from him.

I think the NDP have an obligation to apologize to the people of Ontario. Ontario families are going through challenging times. Ontario families are struggling as we've come through the toughest recession in recent memory, and Ontario families are working very hard to deal with increasing energy rates. The last thing they need is for a political party to try to get headlines by coming out with incorrect information, but not just incorrect information—information that is grossly inadequate. That's not coming from me; that's coming from the Ontario Energy Board, it's coming from Toronto Hydro, it's coming from the EDC, it's coming from local distribution companies across this province, who are saying—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: Many Ontarians can't afford their hydro bills. Hydro rates are high, in part, because Ontarians are paying off debt from over-budget nuclear plants. You just said, Premier: \$60 per year. Now this government is plunging ahead with the Darlington refurbishment, even though the costs are "uncertain." Why is the government rolling the dice again on our hydro bills?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll try to pull together the various components of the NDP electricity plan. So we should not shut down coal-fired generation; we should not pursue energy conservation; we should, apparently, freeze rates; we should not continue to invest in clean, green energy and the jobs that come along with that. They also want us to shut down nuclear generation in Ontario. They might as well just hold up a big sign saying, "Let's turn out the lights in Ontario." That would be irresponsible. It is not in keeping with our expectations and our needs at the beginning of the 21st century. We need a responsible plan to ensure that we have a clean, reliable, stable electricity system in place to meet the needs of our families, our schools, our hospitals and our businesses. At the same time, we're going to clean up our air and create new jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: As you well know, Premier, nuclear energy is not emission-free, it is not reliable and it is not affordable. A report by the Ontario Clean Air Alliance indicates that cost estimates for rebuilding Darlington are overly optimistic, that Ontarians could be on the hook for overruns of up to \$21 billion.

Ontario families are having enough difficulty paying for their hydro bills. How much higher will those bills get if you proceed with your Darlington plan and don't put the burden of overruns on the shoulders of those who do that work?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, if we combine the collective wisdom, shall I say, of the opposition parties—they don't want us to invest in smart meters; they don't want us to invest in new generation; they don't want us to invest in new transmission; they don't want us to invest in clean, green energy; they don't want us to invest in new jobs. They want us to shut down nuclear; they want us to find ways to continue to burn dirty coal. I think that combination represents a terrible, irresponsible approach that is out of keeping with the desires and the needs and the values of Ontario families. So we're putting forward a thoughtful, responsible plan.

We know that there are costs associated with investing heavily in the modernization of our electricity system. We understand that. But it's a plan that we absolutely need to move forward with so we have the reliability. At the same time, we're going to clean up our air and we're going to create new jobs in a clean, green electricity sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Last week, the Premier was described as ducking the question by many a reporter, and I think this week the Premier has been consistent. Ontario Power Generation is seeking another rate hike to cover \$1.1 billion just to start planning the Darlington refurbishment. That's another charge on hydro bills for people who are already making it very clear to everyone in this Legislature that they are being pressed, and pressed hard.

There are less expensive and cleaner ways to meet Ontario's energy needs. Why won't this government sub-

mit its plans to a public review, an environmental assessment, so that people can question the assumptions and put forward the alternatives that will make a difference in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The refurbishment of our nuclear units is one of the most significant projects that this province will be embarking on, something that is absolutely necessary if we're going to ensure that we can keep the lights on for future generations. Now, the NDP doesn't support nuclear power; we recognize that. But Ontario Power Generation has an obligation to ensure that as we embark on this very significant project, they do adequate planning leading up to that. They will be applying to the Ontario Energy Board as they move forward, and this project is pretty far down the road still, but they will be applying to ensure that they can recover the costs of the planning and the work that goes into this project, and the Ontario Energy Board will do their job to ensure that what they're applying for is appropriate.

Let them do their job. Let them ensure that the costs are appropriate. And let us get on with ensuring that we have a strong, reliable and clean system—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1100

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. The Premier likes to talk about the importance of families and neighbours. A recent newspaper column last week reported that when your children years ago asked why you made them shovel a neighbour's driveway, you replied: "Because we can."

Premier, will you show that same can-do attitude today to your neighbours who are struggling with their hydro bills, your neighbours, families all across the province, who want to know what is in the OEB report that should tell them what is going to happen to hydro rates and how much they are going to go up under your so-called long-term energy plan? Will you show that can-do attitude today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: For a very long time now we've been joining with Ontarians to ensure that indeed we can turn around this energy system that you left Ontarians in, a system that was in decay.

Ontarians, this government, all of us within the energy sector are working very hard to undo the damage that that government did. That involves building a stronger, more reliable and cleaner system of energy. That involves building 8,000 new megawatts of power, a 20% increase. Ontarians are involved in that. That's ensuring that they have a stable supply of energy. That's important to the very families you're talking about. They are involved with ensuring that we've upgraded 5,000 new megawatts of transmission and distribution. That's like going coast to coast in the country of Canada. That's a very signifi-

cant contribution, something that you obviously do not support.

We stand with those families to ensure—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Seven times, and now for the eighth time: Initially, the Ontario Energy Board denied it had done any forecast of how much your energy experiments and taxes on hydro are costing families—neighbours. This is a bit odd because forecasting hydro costs is exactly what the OEB does. The letter uncovered by the Ontario PC caucus shows that the OEB corrected the record by admitting that a forecast report was done, but added that your report won't be shared with the industry or families who pay the bills.

For the eighth time, it is now time that the Premier or the minister share the OEB report with their neighbours. Why? Because you can.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Halton, the member from Lanark, please come to order. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We have continued to be very, very clear with Ontarians. We recognize that there is a cost to building that stronger, cleaner, more reliable—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. I'm just going to let the clock run.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We've been very clear to Ontarians. There is a cost to building a stronger, more reliable and cleaner system of energy. We have had to make investments. We have had to play a lot of catch-up because that party opposite failed to make investments when they were in office.

We're working with Ontarians to ensure that we do plan into the future. That's why last week we announced that we're moving forward with a long-term plan for our energy system, building on the plan that we've put in place. We're looking 20 years ahead. We're seeking the advice of Ontarians across this province to make sure that we can build a stronger, more reliable and cleaner system of energy not just until—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Ontarians are getting ripped off on their hydro bills. Patricia Morris of Hanover, Ontario, can be fairly described as an energy miser. She consumes only \$22 worth of electricity in an average billing but she gets billed nearly four times that amount—more than \$85. Miss Morris feels that she's getting gouged and wants to know why. She especially wants to know why she has to pay HST on her entire hydro bill and, most egregiously, on the debt retirement charges.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Premier, myself, this government have been very, very clear. We really do get it when we understand the challenges facing Ontario families today as a result of the global recession and as a result of the need to make further investments in our energy system.

Just yesterday, the Premier met with a number of seniors as he announced that 740,000 Ontario seniors will see an increase in tax relief. Under the Ontario energy and property tax credit, 2.8 million Ontarians will see tax relief totalling \$1.3 billion annually. This represents an increase of \$525 million over the 2009 property tax credit. This is going to help the very families the member has raised with those increasing energy bills. It will be of significant assistance to seniors, to low- and middle-income—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Miss Morris isn't alone. We have received and heard from thousands of Ontarians who are sick and tired of being gouged on their hydro bills. The debt retirement charge is neither a good nor a service. Why are Ontarians like Ms. Morris forced to pay the HST on hydro debt, and why won't this government do as New Democrats have suggested and remove the HST entirely from hydro bills?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I really wish we didn't have to deal with the debt that the Tories left us—that \$20 billion that, unfortunately, the NDP would like us to wish away—but we need to deal with that debt and bring it down. That \$20 billion has come down. We're working hard to try to get the burden off the backs of Ontario ratepayers, and that is a challenge.

One of the things that we have done, recognizing that families are struggling these days given the global recession as we move through into a slow recovery, is an announcement the Premier made, as I shared with you earlier. That announcement will ensure that seniors will receive up to \$1,025 in tax relief. That's going to help. Other Ontarians who own or rent a house are going to receive up to \$900 in tax relief. That's going to be of great assistance to those families. We're going to keep working with Ontario families—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. David Orazietti: My question's for the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. Given the economic challenges we continue to face in mining, forestry and pulp and paper, it's important that we ensure provincial infrastructure is modernized to support economic development that we all want to see take place in northern Ontario. The northern Ontario growth plan articulates the vision that northerners have for the region, and a key part of resource development is having secure,

reliable rail transportation to move these products to other parts of Canada and throughout the world.

Minister, last Friday, as you know, we took a historic step to improve rail infrastructure in northeastern Ontario. Can you elaborate on this important investment and why it was important to make?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I thank the honourable member for the question. I'm pleased to say that he was able to make the announcement on behalf of our government last Friday—a \$30-million investment. I want to thank my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin as well for the support and advocacy.

Certainly the member is quite right to note the importance our rail lines play and how that ties into our strategy in northern Ontario, providing reliable transportation for resource development, but also the economic importance this brings. Indeed, this announcement will mean that Huron Central will basically save 140 direct or indirect jobs, something that will make a great deal of difference in terms of the economic future.

But perhaps what I'm most proud of is that the province made its commitment early. We came to the table in our last budget, thanks to Minister Duncan, and made that \$15-million commitment, which helped ensure that the federal funds came forward as well. Certainly this is a very important investment in terms of our northern growth strategy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. David Orazietti: On behalf of our community, we thank you for this tremendously important investment that supports thousands of jobs at our steel mill and other businesses in our city and region.

In fact, in Sault Ste. Marie, Peterborough MP Dean Del Mastro, chair of the federal all-party rail caucus, said, "No provincial government has ever directly invested in a freight line." The CEO of Huron Central, Mario Brault, said, "This is an exciting day for us ... this announcement is so important to the survival of the rail line."

After decades of deterioration, our community is relieved to know that the renewal of this vital infrastructure will take place. Minister, can you tell us how specifically your ministry has assisted and how the funding will be used for Huron Central?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Again, thanks so much for the question and the great work done by my colleagues from Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma-Manitoulin.

Indeed, you're right: This is very important in terms of Essar Steel and the thousands of jobs that are connected with that.

The fact is, the province has invested in Huron Central before. When this first became a real issue a year or so ago, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. was able to invest \$1.5 million in, quite frankly, crisis funding that was needed for urgent repair to the rail line while we worked to make sure we came together with this agreement.

1110

This major capital investment is going to upgrade the railway line's existing infrastructure by repairing and replacing rail ties, anchors and bridges and certainly improving the railway so that the service can remain profitable; so we can continue not just retaining jobs in northern Ontario, but create jobs. It's a tremendous announcement, and I'm most grateful for the assistance of my colleagues from northern Ontario.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Eight times now, Premier, you've been asked to release the Ontario Energy Board's report about what the future cost of power is going to be to consumers and businesses in this province. I say to you, as a former Minister of Energy: First of all, I take offence that you say we left the place in shambles. We have always had the most reliable and affordable electricity system in North America, and you know that that is a fact of life.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Health, Minister of Education, Minister of Community Safety, Minister of the Environment, member from Sault Ste. Marie, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Please continue.

Mr. Jim Wilson: It is you, sir, who are taking us down a path of grand experimentation, at a huge cost to jobs, families and seniors in this province. You refuse to release your energy plan, and now, for the eighth time—ninth time, I assume—you're going to refuse to release the Ontario Energy Board report.

You represent the shareholders of the system; the shareholders are the ratepayers of Ontario. They own the system; you do not, sir. You have the responsibility to report to them in an open, honest and transparent way and tell them what they're getting for their money and how much it's going to cost.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I have a different take on this, of course. What I think Ontarians find offensive is that this former Minister of Energy presided over the quiet demise and dilapidation of their electricity system. They refused to invest in generation. They refused to invest in transmission. They ramped up coal-fired generation. They ramped up the stranded debt. They refused to do all the things that were needed to do to ensure that we can pass on to our children and grandchildren—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. The member from Simcoe North will withdraw the comment he just made.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I withdraw it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Stop the clock.

Member from Halton—twice, the member from Halton. I would appreciate some respect for the chair.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm done, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Premier, your—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Your own member is about to ask a supplementary question. He is sitting right to my left and I can't hear him because he's being shouted down by his own party.

Please continue.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Premier, your rewriting of history is very interesting and very inaccurate. The only coal-fired plant that's ever been closed in this province was ordered closed by my honourable colleague to my left here, and she was Minister of the Environment under a PC government. That is a fact of history.

The stranded debt of \$35 billion that I inherited when I became Minister of Energy in the PC government came directly from David Peterson and his decisions around Darlington, which racked up at least \$14 billion of it, so you can't blame that on us. We had a plan to pay that debt off in 15 years. That deadline is quickly passing and you don't have a plan. You won't release your long-range plan, and now you won't tell consumers, upright and forthright, what the future holds: whether they're going to have a job; whether factories can afford to be open, because they don't know what their power rates are going to be and you are refusing to tell them.

You should resign, and your energy minister—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's been a while since we've heard a rant from the member. It doesn't shed a lot of light on the issue, but it's always entertaining, so we appreciate the entertainment value in that.

He wants us to talk about what happened in the past. He wants us to talk about what happened when they were in power, when he was a minister. This is important: The Conservative government, when they were in power, changed the freedom-of-information act to exclude Hydro One and the OLG. At the time, they said it was to secure competitiveness. The only thing you ended up securing was sole-source consulting contracts to Conservative insiders like Paul Rhodes, Michael Gourley, Leslie Noble and Deb Hutton. That was their way. They want to take us back there.

The member mentioned coal. Coal went up 127% when they were in power. We brought it down 70%, and very, very soon, this government will—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

The member from Parkdale—High Park.

PEST CONTROL

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Landlords are renting units knowing that the units have bedbug infestations. We have nothing to force landlords to clean up their properties. Work orders are routinely challenged and left undone because of endless appeals. Why is this government refusing to support landlord licensing as a way of ensuring that landlords keep units bedbug-free?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Our government recognizes that there is a social, economic and psychological cost associated with this type of infestation. That's why our ministry and several ministries in the government are working with the lead ministry, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, at arriving at some recommendations.

In this part of the question, I want to commend the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, Mike Colle.

Mr. Bob Delaney: There's a guy who's taken real leadership.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: He's shown real leadership in this. It isn't about political opportunism for Mike Colle, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence; it's about coming up with recommendations. It's about finding solutions. That's why I'm very proud that he's leading this summit, which will come with some concrete recommendations we can react to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The minister knows that there is inadequate response by his government to the growing bedbug problem. The member for Eglinton–Lawrence's Renters' Right to Know Act will have little real impact on controlling the spread of bedbugs unless there is a requirement to certify that previously infested units are bedbug-free before they're rented again. When will this government come forward with such a certification requirement? Show some leadership, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: What the member fails to tell the House and the people of Ontario is that under the City of Toronto Act, under the amendments made to the Municipal Act, municipalities across Ontario can do what she's asking. It's up to the municipalities. We give them that responsibility.

You see, there's the difference: It's all about political opportunism over there. On this side of the House, with Mike Colle, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence—he's about finding solutions. He's about finding recommendations. He's about coming up with concrete ideas to solve this infestation, not political opportunism. It's all about real solutions. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence deserves an awful lot of praise for the great work he is doing.

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PEST CONTROL

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): At this rate, we're not going to finish question period and you will all be in your beds by the time it does get done.

Member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When my children ask, "What did you in the war, Dad?" I guess I'm going to have an interesting answer.

The question I have is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I think all members of the House really are deeply concerned about this. Throughout the province, we've seen a growing concern about this infestation. In my own riding of Eglinton–Lawrence, I've seen real live people come to tears over this: the stress, the anxiety—never mind the bites—the lack of sleep. You can't go to work. It really affects everybody's everyday life.

As you know, later today, we're convening a summit here at the Macdonald Block, where we'll be looking for real suggestions and solutions from front-line workers like the WoodGreen Foundation and Toronto Public Health. We're looking for some solid solutions.

I'm just wondering, Minister—and I've talked to you about this before: How can your ministry really help in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for the question, but most importantly for his advocacy, his leadership and his responsiveness to his community on this issue. Thank you for hosting the summit this afternoon.

This is one issue where we all need to work together to find solutions. So my ministry is working with other ministries—municipal affairs and housing, community and social services, health promotion and sport, environment, tourism and culture. We're all working together to find solutions. We know that this is a problem that is multidimensional and certainly reaches beyond the borders of Toronto.

Our ministry will be an ongoing support to this initiative. The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, my parliamentary assistant, and the associate chief medical officer of health, Dr. David Williams, will be attending this afternoon. We will be working together to act on the recommendations.

Thank you again to the honourable member for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Mike Colle: To the minister: Across the province, it's clear that we need to step up our efforts to inform the public and to try and prevent and eradicate these bedbugs with a comprehensive strategy.

There are a number of existing resources out there for help such as Toronto Public Health and the helpline, but people have been saying we need to do more. We need standardized information and research. Basically, there are no benchmarks. There's no tracking. We don't really know what's happening out there.

I'll ask the minister: Can we get a real, hard look by your ministry to help us find out how we get these

bedbugs, how we can prevent them and what we can do to inform people to ensure that they don't come into their homes?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I completely agree with the member: Public information is a critical part of the solution here.

There is help available now. Toronto Public Health has a helpline—416-338-7600—to get information about bedbugs. A public health inspector will provide information over the phone about bedbug identification and what is needed to treat the infestation and prevent it from coming back. Public health inspectors are also available to present educational seminars on the issue.

But we know there is more to do, and we also know this is more than a Toronto issue. That's why the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and I have written to our public health units across the province, and we are requesting their attention to this issue. We are asking that they ensure that appropriate information and measures exist at the local level across the province.

We're very much looking forward to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Transportation: Carillion Canada has been awarded multi-million-dollar contracts by the Ministry of Transportation. Carillion enters into agreements with subcontractors to perform the work, Carillion gets paid for the work and then refuses to pay the subcontractors, forcing them into costly court proceedings, and then proposes settlements for pennies on the dollar.

The ministry turns a blind eye to these unethical business practices, claiming it's strictly a contractual arrangement between Carillion and the subcontractor. Would the minister tell us how she can possibly justify doing nothing while Ontario businesses are essentially being extorted by one of the ministry's largest contractors?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows quite well that our ministry complies with the provisions of the Construction Lien Act in all cases, in all of our construction contracts. In fact, the member opposite has had the opportunity to come in and to be briefed on this subject in our ministry. We've tried to provide him with all the information that we could on this subject, and certainly with the individuals who are concerned.

We have a legal agreement in place with our primary contractors and we ensure that all our legal obligations are met. As I say, the member opposite has had opportunities in the past to come in to talk with us in the Ministry of Transportation, and that offer stands, for him to come in and ask further questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The minister knows full well that this is not an isolated occurrence and it goes beyond what the contractual arrangements are. She knows that these

unethical business practices are common to Carillion in every jurisdiction where they do business. According to a survey by Top Service, the credit reference agency, Carillion "paid one in 100 subcontractors on time ... last year." Chief Minister Fleming of Anguilla referred to Carillion's dispute with workers as "a matter of national urgency." The Edinburgh Evening News reported that Carillion "has been failing to pay its subcontractors for weeks." From the UK: "Subcontractors ... will have to wait twice as long as usual to be paid, now that sites have been taken over by Carillion."

My question to the minister is this: At the very least, knowing the unethical practices of this major multinational corporation doing business in the province of Ontario, will she at least—because she has the ability to do this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If there are concerns about a particular contractor or a particular issue, we will obviously be willing to look into any of those concerns. As I've said, the member opposite has had the chance to come into the ministry and has had a conversation with our ministry officials.

But this process and these rules have been in place for many, many years. The member opposite was the Minister of Transportation, and he knows full well what rules are in place. He knows full well that the ministry complies with all of those rules. He also knows that if there is a concern, then I will absolutely be willing to look at it.

But I think it's very, very clear that the member opposite seems to have forgotten that when there are rules in place, those are the rules we have to follow. Those are the rules that protect companies in the province, and in the case where there is a problem, obviously we will look into it. If the member opposite has more information he'd like to share—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, I am advocating on behalf of a constituent from Kapuskasing who finds himself in quite a tough situation. It's a case of "penny wise and pound foolish." He's a gentleman who's visually impaired and also has issues with regard to physical impairments both with his arms and his hands. In order to be able to live independently in his own home, he needs to have software that goes on a computer that allows him, first of all, voice recognition so he can speak to his computer and type can come out, and screen-reading software to read it back to him.

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Your ministry has funded both those types of software, both the voice-recognition and the screen-reading software. Unfortunately, what he's missing is a software that bridges those two pieces together. As a result, he is

not able to do what needs to be done to communicate, and he might end up having to move out of his own home because he will not be able to live independently.

My question is, are you prepared to assist?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This is a very good question, and thank you for asking this question.

I'm very concerned about this gentleman having to move out if he doesn't have the proper tools. I would like to know more about this gentleman and I would appreciate it if both of us talked directly about this.

But what I'm going to say is, I'm very pleased that this government adopted, in 2005, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. I'm very proud of what we have done. We're developing standards to be adopted and to be in place in five different areas. Of course, we appreciate the input of the disability community and all sectors to make sure that, for these standards, we have it right when we adopt them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Madam Minister, it's a question of \$1,400, and we're going to provide you with the details so that you can follow up. But just to be clear, for \$1,400 we can make sure that this man is able to live independently in his home. If we don't pay the \$1,400, he's not going to be able to communicate with anybody, and as a result, he's at risk of having to move into a group home in order to be able to live.

I say again, we'll send you the information, but we've been working on this for the better part of 10 months and have yet to find a resolution with the ministries and at the minister's level as well. We'll send this back to you, and we're asking: Please do the right thing. For \$1,400, he gets to stay at home. If you don't pay, he lives in a group home. Which do you want?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I can say to the member that I will look into it and make sure that this individual can live as independently as he can.

Again, this government has adopted this beautiful piece of legislation. We're the leader here in Canada and in the world. We are developing standards, and a lot of people with disabilities did help us to develop these standards to make sure that we have it right.

I hope that I will never have a question like this in the future because Ontario will be fully accessible.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. Last week, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario released his annual report. A section of his report commented on Ottawa's recent experience with beach closures due to sewage overflows following rainstorms. The health of the Ottawa River is a very important issue for my constituents. They should be able to enjoy the beaches, like Westboro Beach in my riding, without worrying about pollution.

In July, I attended the commissioning of two combined sewer regulators in Ottawa. They are part of the Ottawa River action plan to reduce sewage overflows.

In his report, the Environmental Commissioner applauded the action plan, stating, "Ottawa will be an Ontario leader in controlling overflows into its water." However, he also noted rightly that "New infrastructure comes at a cost."

Could the minister share with my constituents how the Ontario government is helping the city of Ottawa to upgrade its waste water infrastructure to fix these chronic problems?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: This is an important issue for Ottawa. I thank the member from Ottawa Centre for the question.

The city of Ottawa has become a leader in this area, and we are proud to be part of Ottawa's success. We invested \$33 million in the Ottawa River action plan through the Investing in Ontario Act, which, incidentally, both opposition parties opposed. Plus, we invested \$21 million of stimulus funding for 13 waste water projects to improve environmental efficiency. These projects involved separating aging combined sewers into separate storm water and waste water sewers so that even after major storms, treatment plants are not overwhelmed.

The Environmental Commissioner noted, "New infrastructure comes at a cost." Protecting the public health and quality of life of Ottawans is worth every penny of the cost.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It's no surprise that issues like this are very important to Ontarians, who, like all Canadians, value the sanctity of the natural resources that we are so fortunate to have. Moreover, I know my constituents will appreciate these local investments that will help keep the beaches they enjoy clean and the waters they swim in safe.

The Environmental Commissioner's report also raised concerns about the Great Lakes, about water quality standards and aging waste water infrastructure, and it challenged us to do more. The Great Lakes are literally an enormous part of our province's identity. More importantly, they are an integral part of the day-to-day life of countless Ontarians who not only use and enjoy their waters and shores but rely on them through municipal water services.

Could the minister tell us what our government is doing to ensure Ontario is making progress on Great Lakes water quality? Can Ontarians still have confidence that the lakes and beaches they enjoy are safe?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my colleague for the question. We have some of the cleanest water and some of the highest standards in North America. We're proud of that. We've had the same standards as our friends to the other side of the Great Lakes, the Americans, since 1983, but we have much more stringent posting requirements in regard to E. coli, because the protection of human health is paramount to our ministry.

Working together with the Ministry of Infrastructure, we have made an investment of some \$1.5 billion by way

of grants and some \$1.8 billion by way of secured loans from the province to our municipal partners, because they too believe in the sanctity of our water and how important it is that we protect it today and for future generations.

I'm pleased to announce to the House that the remaining six primary centres for water treatment have now been upgraded—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Premier. Today is World School Milk Day, and I want to commend the Ontario dairy farmers who have joined with people and organizations around the world to give students nutritious, fresh milk free of charge.

Can you explain to them why you are banning 500-millilitre containers of chocolate milk in schools, even though studies have shown that doing so will reduce student milk consumption by 30%?

Premier, I have a copy here of a document paid for by the provincial government, and I quote from the document: "Children need two cups"—500 millilitres—"of milk, chocolate milk or fortified soy beverage every day."

Can you explain why you are spending taxpayers' dollars to tell parents that their children should drink 500 millilitres of chocolate milk while banning the same thing from your schools? Is it just because you can't resist banning things?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: First of all, I would like to say that our government very much appreciates the very good work of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and all of their efforts to promote milk within our schools. They have a long history of that. We know that many students right across Ontario have benefited from that.

I can say to the members of the assembly today that for all families in Ontario, we are going to do everything—first of all, chocolate milk is available in our schools. We want to ensure that students will be able to access that fine dairy product in whatever container they would like to purchase it in. That's our commitment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended and there are no deferred votes.

FARMERS' MARKET

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to remind the members that today is the second annual Speaker's Queen's Park farmers' market. It just began on the front lawn and runs until 2 p.m. today.

Come out to meet local farmers and enjoy some fresh local produce. I would encourage all of our guests and all of our friends and all the staff within the Legislature and the government precincts, who I know are glued to their

computers and televisions watching their ministers in action, to come and join us on the front lawn at Queen's Park.

This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's an honour for me today to introduce Sister Dorothy Ryan, who is in the east members' gallery. She is the Superior General of the congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in my hometown of Peterborough. Shortly, I'll be introducing a private bill dealing with the Sisters of St. Joseph in Peterborough.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HIGH SCHOOL IN STITTSVILLE

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I rise today on behalf of my constituents in Stittsville. The former village of Stittsville is a growing community in the west end of the city of Ottawa. It currently has a population of 26,000, and planned development includes approximately 16,000 more homes.

Stittsville is a great place, but it is missing one important institution: a public high school. Students and their parents have to choose between travelling 15 kilometres to South Carleton High School in Richmond or going to Sacred Heart Catholic High School in Stittsville, which now has a student population of 1,800.

Twenty-five per cent of the students who attend public elementary schools in Stittsville change to the Catholic high school because it is in their community. I might add that it's a pretty good high school as well.

The Ministry of Education has recognized that Stittsville is growing, and is starting construction on a new elementary school, with the sod-turning next month. This is great news, but students who attend that new elementary school will grow up and need a high school.

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has identified a high school for Stittsville as a top priority and submitted a business case to the ministry. I have met with local trustee Lynn Scott on this issue and have spoken informally with the Minister of Education, but I hope for a formal meeting in the very near future to discuss this very important need for the people of Stittsville.

ULTIMATE FISHING TOWN

Mr. Howard Hampton: Imagine a small, tourism-based community in northwestern Ontario winning the title the Ultimate Fishing Town in Canada. Well, that is exactly what can happen over the next 24 hours. The World Fishing Network is conducting an online contest to select the ultimate fishing town in Canada. The contest

ends tomorrow, Thursday, at 4:59 p.m. Eastern time. As I speak, it is really between two communities: Nestor Falls, Ontario, and Port Alberni, British Columbia.

Tourism in Ontario, especially northern Ontario, needs a lift, and the best way to give northern Ontario tourism a lift and put us on the tourism map is to go to www.wfn.tv/fishingtown and click on Nestor Falls to record your vote. You can vote every 12 hours from now until 4:59 p.m. Eastern time Thursday.

Imagine the recognition it would give to northern Ontario tourism to have one of our communities selected as the Ultimate Fishing Town in all of Canada. Come on, people across Ontario, especially northern Ontario: Go to www.wfn.tv/fishingtown and click on Nestor Falls to make northern Ontario tourism a Canadian winner.

COUNTY OF ESSEX

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Go Nestor Falls!

You might have the best fishing town in the world, but I want to tell you some good things about one of the best ridings in Ontario, and that's the riding of Essex.

This has been going on for some time, but it's getting better. Think about it. We've got great family health teams delivering health care in Harrow and Essex. We've got one in nearby Leamington in my colleague Pat Hoy's riding and one in Tilbury as well in his riding. So delivery of health care is getting better in Essex county every day.

Not only that, we have a nurse-led practitioner clinic in Belle River that has opened. I attended the opening event, and it's a great facility. We have a nurse practitioner clinic that has just recently been approved, its budget is approved and the location is approved in Essex, so we're going to have a great nurse practitioner clinic in Essex.

For the last few years, we've been expanding Highway 3 to a four-lane highway. That's in its second phase and soon to be finished, and we'll be moving on to phase 3. So highway travel is better in Essex county.

I must end by saying that we've had one of the greatest wine seasons that we've had in a long time for our wine region. Come down and enjoy some of our wine.

TENANTS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Earlier this month, a report conducted for the Ontario and Canadian landlord federations showed a shocking favouritism of homeowners over renters by this government. The report showed that, provincially, the average household of a homeowner receives a subsidy of \$493 whereas the average household of a renter receives only \$58.

This finding is particularly alarming because, on average, homeowners have double the income of tenants. In fact, in 2008, the average income for a homeowner was \$92,885. In comparison, the average income of a renter was \$45,558. Plain and simple: All Ontarians should be

treated fairly regardless of whether they are homeowners or tenants.

In their 2003 platform, we saw the McGuinty Liberals promise that they would "provide real protection for tenants." I think that providing homeowners with eight times the benefits they give to tenants is giving Ontario tenants the short end of the stick.

I would hope that the McGuinty Liberals are assessing this inequity and that we will see equal opportunity as a key component of their affordable housing strategy due out this fall.

OVER 55 LONDON

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I rise in the House today to congratulate Over 55, one of London's prized employment agencies, on their silver anniversary, which was held on September 26.

Over 55 is a one-of-a-kind organization that provides employment services for people over 55 years old. Their approach to employment is not a common method in Ontario. There is a stereotype that people over the age of 55 are not in great demand in the job market, but this organization defies this generalization and has helped many people find work. They have been successfully connecting and retaining skilled people for 25 years, and they have renewed their commitment to serving the community.

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I attended the party with Mr. Bentley and, of course, the many volunteers who make Over 55 a successful organization. We had the pleasure of honouring the volunteers who make this group a success, people like Margaret Williams and Paul Dolbear, who are the most active members. I would like also to thank Mr. Allan Wright, Douglas Jervis, and the volunteers who make Over 55 an invaluable community organization.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to read this statement, and I also want to thank Dr. Zecevic for her speech on that day to convince the people how much the people over 55 are important for our community for their experience and expertise.

LEADING GIRLS, BUILDING COMMUNITIES AWARDS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to pay tribute today to eight exceptional young women in my riding of Durham who received the Leading Girls, Building Communities Award. The Leading Girls award celebrates the achievement of young girls under the age of 18 who demonstrate exceptional leadership in working to improve the lives of others in their school and their community. Leading girls in my riding include, but are not limited to, the following: Kaitlyn Anderson, Ava Doner, Melisa Fracz, Felicia Grant, Maggie Hutchinson, Carly MacDougall, Cassidy Sankey and Madison Stange.

Whether it was serving in our very own Legislature as pages, fundraising for the less fortunate, or raising awareness of epilepsy through Purple Day, these young leaders

demonstrated their willingness to give generously of their time and talent to others. I know all of my colleagues in the House will join me in congratulating all the winners of the Leading Girls award, these young ladies, our future leaders in our communities and indeed our province. I wish them all well.

TRANSIT FUNDING

Mr. Bill Mauro: On June 14 of this year, we had another incredible announcement at the Bombardier plant in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. In June, I had the pleasure of announcing 770 million in provincial dollars for 182 light rail vehicles, with an option for 118 more. Much of the work and the final assembly will occur at our local plant.

This recent purchase flows from our campaign commitment in 2003 to revive mass transit funding in Ontario. In 2006 and 2008, we announced contracts for a total of 460 subway cars valued at over a billion dollars, including over 300 million in provincial dollars. In 2009 and 2010 we announced two contracts for 45 GO Transit bi-level cars worth \$120 million, including 94 million provincial dollars. And still there's more. In 2009, I had the pleasure, along with the Premier, of announcing at our local plant a \$1.2-billion contract for replacement streetcars, with 416 million in unbudgeted provincial dollars.

In total, these contracts represent a provincial commitment of roughly \$1.6 billion, and that funding has played a critical role in producing \$3.1 billion in mass transit contracts.

Just yesterday, the leader of the NDP said she opposed everything our government does. She and her party oppose many of these investments, investments that have created hundreds of jobs at the plant in my riding. I'm told that Bombardier will be hiring an additional 200 to 400 people very shortly in addition to the hundreds already hard at work, and they may be implementing a third shift. These contracts are part of the reason why Thunder Bay currently has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the province.

ASSOCIATION OF PHYSICIANS OF PAKISTANI DESCENT OF NORTH AMERICA

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This past weekend, I had the pleasure of attending the AGM of the physicians of Pakistani origin in North America, Canadian chapter, in my riding of Mississauga–Brampton South. It was an evening to celebrate the many contributions that members of APPNA have made to our health care sector.

In addition, this organization is also committed to humanitarian aid work. Recently, they raised funds for victims of floods in Pakistan. Some left their practices to go and help. I commend the excellent professional and humanitarian work of this organization. Their deeds make us all proud, as they demonstrate the best of the Canadian tradition: helping those in need.

To complement the humanitarian work of this organization, I ask every member of this House: Let's all work together to help our brothers and sisters in Pakistan in their hour of need. The need is not only enormous; it is long-term.

CITY OF PETERBOROUGH

Mr. Jeff Leal: Today was a great day for Peterborough here at Queen's Park. Thank you to everyone who took the time to drop in on our annual event. There was a wide range of companies and organizations from our area that truly demonstrate the diversity and economic strength that Peterborough has to offer.

If you attended today, you would have met the president of Trent University and representatives from Fleming College, and learned about our expansion plans for Peterborough airport.

The Greater Peterborough Area Economic Development Corporation would have provided you with business information and tourism locations.

The 4th Line Theatre is a famous theatre company from our area that performs outside all summer. You've seen videos of past performances.

The Peterborough Festival of Trees is one of our major hospital fundraising events every year, and our successful family health team office were all present to meet you.

Peterborough Green-Up helps residents of Peterborough to reduce their footprint on the environment. They offer great support and information on living green.

You would have had the opportunity to taste beer produced by the Publican House Brewery, a local brewery right in the heart of Peterborough, and taste food from a local catering company.

General Electric of Canada provided our guests with a visual tour of their cutting-edge manufacturing facility. I could go on and on, but there isn't enough time to mention everyone who attended today to showcase what Peterborough has to offer.

I'm proud of my riding and happy that today everyone here had an opportunity to catch a glimpse of what it is like to be from Peterborough, Ontario.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to section 28 of the Auditor General Act, I have today laid upon the table the audited financial statements of the Office of Auditor General for the year ending March 31, 2010.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF PETERBOROUGH ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2010

Mr. Leal moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr37, An Act respecting The Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of Peterborough, in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

PETITIONS

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition presented to me by Mr. Mark Willoughby of Toronto. It reads as follows:

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario

"In Support of an Online Organ Donor Registry

"Whereas one person in Canada dies every three days waiting for an organ transplant and over 1,600 Ontarians are on a waiting list for organ and tissue donations;

"Whereas organ donor registrations in some jurisdictions are as high as 80%, but Ontario lags far behind at 17%;

"Whereas Ontario's antiquated organ donor registration process still requires forms to be mailed in or personal attendance at ServiceOntario health card offices;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on the Minister of Health to immediately implement the resolution tabled by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees that calls for the creation of an online organ donor registration link on the ServiceOntario website that would enable people to register as organ donors using their OHIP number."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

"Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

"Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 80;

"Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment in 2007 to provide a 2% base funding increase to agencies providing developmental services every year up to 2010-11;

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"Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

"Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to service providers in the developmental services sector."

This has been signed by several people from north-western Ontario, and I affix my signature as well.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: I have a petition that contains signatures from citizens throughout Ontario, which reads as follows:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known, universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"Whereas, while more research is needed, MS patients should not need to await such results;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow people with multiple sclerosis to obtain the venoplasty that so impacts their quality of life and that of their families and caregivers."

I agree with this petition and am affixing my signature.

Carol Bullis of Barrie has been hugely instrumental in obtaining over 7,000 signatures from Ontario citizens asking—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. You're finished with the petition, correct?

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: I am, but I am tabling a second petition, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You'll have to wait until the next rotation, please.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition for provincial oversight of the OSPCA, to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I support and affix my signature to this petition and send it down to the table.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Thomas.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

"Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

"Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 70;

"Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment in 2007 to provide a 2% base funding increase to agencies providing developmental services every year up to 2010-11;

"Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

"Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to service providers in the developmental services sector."

I've affixed my signature as I'm in agreement with this and give it to page Brigid.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: Carol Bullis of Barrie has been hugely instrumental in obtaining over 7,000 signatures from Ontario citizens asking that MS sufferers in Canada have access to the tests and treatment in this country. She has asked me to table her petition in the Ontario Legislature—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Get to the petition, please.

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: It's quite long, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I'll send it to the table.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You can summarize but you just cannot turn it into a member's statement, is what I'm trying to get at, please. Thanks.

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: In summarizing what she has written and in summarizing her petition, it refers to the fact that there have been breakthroughs by a Dr. Zamboni. There has been a simple Doppler ultrasound scan. She maintains that this approach is inexpensive and largely non-intrusive. We are asking that everyone affected by MS reach out to the media and MPs and MPPs. This is a real breakthrough and she is asking that people have access to the test and the treatment.

That is a summation, Mr. Speaker.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I'll try to be quick here.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees," who is with us here today, "on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers”—subrogation—“of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I'm pleased to sign in support of this very effective petition to save the lives of many animals.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

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“Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

“Whereas, due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

“Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child, and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day.”

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mrs. Julia Munro: This is a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister ... refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by” my neighbour “Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I have affixed my signature and given it to page Henry.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NARCOTICS SAFETY AND AWARENESS ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ET LA SENSIBILISATION EN MATIÈRE DE STUPÉFIANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 27, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances / Projet de loi 101, Loi prévoyant la surveillance des activités liées à la prescription et à la préparation de certaines substances désignées.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I can support the objective of reducing inappropriate prescriptions and the abuse of prescription narcotics and other controlled substances; like all Ontarians, we support action to reduce improper access to narcotics. But Bill 101 needs to be clarified, and it needs implementation, evaluation and treatment services to be detailed. While being very careful about improper access to narcotics, we must be sure not to restrict or impede access to these drugs when they are necessary for pain management or like medical use.

One non-medical but very significant concern is the government's access to personal health records: its ability to collect, analyze and report on the prescribing and dispensing of narcotic drugs. Bill 101 mandates prescribers and dispensers to provide information to the minister and make it an offence not to do so. The minister can also appoint inspectors who can enter a medical practice or pharmacy without notice or warrant.

I question: To what records do these inspectors have access? Can the health care provider refuse, and on what

grounds can he refuse? For example, if my physician knows that I have no narcotic-like prescriptions and no need for them, can she refuse access to my records? I want to see clear regulations on this issue to ensure that the medical information of all patients is afforded the privacy and security that is available now, when only a court can impel access to medical records.

It indicates that there will be a regulation-providing authority for the Lieutenant Governor to designate additional monitored drugs, to exclude persons from the application of the act but also to specify additional information that must be provided, as well as giving authority to other powers. This causes me concern since there is no requirement for opposition parties to know about or provide input into a regulation, and in this case, issues that are of concern would become law without our input.

The bill would create a provincial electronic monitoring system that provides alerts when attempts are made by a patient to visit multiple prescribers or multiple dispensers of drugs. Although this system is likely a good idea, the security of patient information must be paramount in this implementation. The fiasco last summer of eHealth makes us very concerned.

Although the minister has announced a strategy to raise awareness of these issues and to work with the health care provider and the public about the safe use of these powerful drugs, I suggest that health care providers are well aware of these issues but that the system needs to be fully analyzed to find the best way to reduce duplication of drug services and prescriptions, as well as effective alternatives to certain narcotic drugs.

I have concerns about the strategy for expansion of addiction treatment services. There's nothing in the act about these provisions and no indication, especially around addiction treatment, of what this will look like. Too many details have been left out of these regulations. As I mentioned before, we need full input from opposition parties to regulations before they're implemented.

Many stakeholders have publicly supported this bill, but concerns have been expressed about the legislation's missing evaluation mechanism system. For those who manage their pain with these drugs, the ripple effect of this legislation could be that they will receive less-effective pain medication and, therefore, less quality health care. There is nothing in this legislation that moves forward on the other elements of narcotics safety, i.e., education and addiction treatment.

During both the narcotics strategy announcements and the introduction of Bill 101, the Minister of Health spoke about the scope and severity of Ontario's narcotics problem. There is no question that Ontario has a serious problem with narcotic drugs. This is an issue that many communities have dealt with and an issue that requires effective and timely action. Statistics from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, CPSO, on the scope of this problem: The main sources of prescription opioids are doctors' prescriptions, 37%—considerably higher than street sources, 21%; or a combination of prescriptions and the street level, 26%. According to one study,

over 66% of deceased patients on opioids were seen by a physician in an outpatient setting four weeks prior to their death. This supports the hypothesis that increased rates of inappropriate or inadequately monitored opioid prescribing contribute significantly to morbidity and unintentional opioid-related deaths.

OxyContin abuse is a growing problem. Prescriptions for OxyContin increased a staggering 850% from 1991-2007. The addition of long-acting OxyContin to the Ontario drug formulary was associated with a fivefold increase in OxyContin-related mortality and a 41% increase in overall opioid-related mortalities. Since controlled-release OxyContin products became available in 1995, the number of hospital admissions related to controlled-release OxyContin went from 3.8% of opioid admissions in 2000 to 55.4% in 2004. CAMH found that among Ontario students in grades 7 through 12, one fifth surveyed, that being 20%, reported using opioids in 2007. By contrast, only 12% of students surveyed reported smoking cigarettes in 2007. It's quite a contrast, something that should be looked into seriously.

Coroners' investigations have found that a high number of deaths are the result of the person taking a combination of opioids and other often illicit drugs that are outside the control of the prescribing physician. The most troubling cases are arising in the chronic non-cancer pain sector and through illicitly obtained prescription opioids. Opioid-related mortality in Ontario doubled—doubled—from 1992 to 2004. Data from the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario shows an alarming rise in the number of unexpected deaths due to opioids. Between 2002 and 2006, opioid-related deaths increased by 49%. Deaths due to OxyContin are rising rapidly and were the most prevalent, accounting for a 240% increase between 2002 and 2006. Increased opioid-related mortality and morbidity is a problem that carries an enormous social burden.

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The average pharmacy price for one 80-milligram OxyContin tablet is \$4. The average street price for the same pill is \$80.54. Therefore, a bottle of 100 pills costing about \$400 has a potential street value of \$8,000. In northern Ontario, Ontario Provincial Police reports have shown that a single 80-milligram OxyContin pill sells for as high as \$400 to \$600 in some First Nations communities, increasing the potential profit to over \$38,300 for a 100-tablet bottle in those areas.

Given that Ontario has the highest use of opioids in Canada, it is shocking that we are lagging behind so many other provinces in our attempts to control the improper use of these drugs. BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and PEI already have prescription monitoring programs in place.

Concerns stem from what is missing in Bill 101 rather than what is included. Many questions have not been answered. The NDP wants extensive committee hearings on this bill to see if we can move it in a more comprehensive direction. Opioid misuse is a complicated issue, as the problem of narcotics abuse is complex. It

requires a multi-pronged approach. There is a persuasive concern about whether Bill 101 will be effective in reducing the narcotics problem currently in Ontario.

Ontario's current crisis of narcotics abuse is about a lack of appropriate pain management services and a failure in this province to ensure that every Ontarian has a primary care provider. It is about addictions and a lack of treatment services. It is about the failure to institute comprehensive, secure electronic health records and electronic prescriptions. It is about the lack of inter-professional collaboration and interdisciplinary care. It is about the lack of education, especially impartial education by non-pharmaceutical educators, for our health professionals.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario recently released a report on this very issue: *Avoiding Abuse, Achieving a Balance: Tackling the Opioid Public Health Crisis*. The report is 40 pages long and includes 31 substantial recommendations to tackle this abuse. Today, the government is moving forward on one—I repeat, one—of those 31 recommendations.

The college's report covers the entire breadth of the problem at hand. Stakeholders across the spectrum, from mental health groups to chronic pain to regulated health colleges etc., all talked about the need for comprehensive action. Together, they pointed to the vast majority of recommendations in the college's excellent report.

There's no question that an electronic monitoring system is an important tool, but it is only one small step and cannot fully impact the myriad factors that have contributed to the crisis in Ontario which we currently face.

An estimated 2.4 million to 3.6 million Ontarians are living with chronic pain, some of which is quite debilitating. Yet there is no coordinated chronic pain management strategy in Ontario. Depending on the community in which you live, your access to pain management varies widely. There are few dedicated chronic pain management clinics—not enough to go around. They have inadequate education not only on narcotics but other pain management strategies for health professionals.

The reality is that because of the delisting of OHIP services, many of what could have been effective pain management tools are not accessible anymore to Ontarians. Some examples: physiotherapy and chiropractic.

In Canada, there is no specialty for pain management. Health professionals are often trying to do the best they can for their patients, but they do not have the tools to be making the right, evidence-informed decisions.

The government acknowledged in their narcotics strategy announcement that there is a need for additional education and collaboration with our health professionals, but we've not heard anything about an emphasis on chronic pain management. Alberta, Nova Scotia and Quebec all have chronic pain management strategies. Why doesn't Ontario? Creating a province-wide strategy of chronic pain management is essential at this point. With close to a million Ontarians who still do not have access to a family physician, we must acknowledge that

this is a significant barrier to reducing the narcotics problem in our province.

The college's report *Avoiding Abuse, Achieving a Balance* states, "Access to health resources depends largely on patients' and health-care providers' ability to navigate a seamless and integrated health system. An integrated system is one in which family physicians are closely linked to other primary care providers, as well as to specialty care physicians, particularly those working in specialized pain clinics. The ideal system would enable patients to access the most appropriate care from the most appropriate provider, easily and locally."

As gatekeepers to the health care system, primary care physicians are the hub of coordinating a patient's journey through interprofessional care. With an interprofessional model of care, patients are treated by different types of providers with training and expertise in different aspects of chronic non-cancer pain and addiction management.

The objectives of interprofessional care go beyond just treating physiological symptoms to addressing psychological needs, social and occupational functioning and also quality of life. For interprofessional care to be effective, there must be strong linkages between family physicians, the gatekeepers to the health care system and other providers, including specialist physicians, specialized pain clinics, nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and counsellors.

When Ontarians have a primary care provider, the potential for abuse declines. Patients are more likely to be referred to other appropriate kinds of pain management services and they are more likely to receive a correct diagnostic level.

The Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions recently released a report, *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*. This committee travelled all across Ontario, spanning 18 months, 30 days of hearings, 230 presenters and 300 submissions.

The province's LHINs have contracts with 150 service providers for addiction services. The committee learned that in spite of the 150 service providers, Ontarians are not getting the assessment treatment and services they require.

Recommendation number 11 of the select committee report reads, "The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should immediately address the problem of addiction to prescription painkillers."

Today, we see a piece of this Bill 101, but the question of addiction treatment services continues to be ignored, and we do not have a comprehensive strategy in front of us once again. We have no details on this, although it was part of the narcotics strategy. It does not seem the government has entered into discussions with stakeholders on what this expansion will entail. The government must acknowledge that we cannot separate the need for action on opioid abuse from addictions to other substances.

This legislation aims to reduce the supply of illicit narcotics, but we cannot simply cut off the supply and think nothing of eradicating this addiction. We cannot

allow this addiction to simply shift to what will become a more available drug. The ministry has an obligation to clearly lay out a plan for ensuring that all Ontarians who are dealing with addictions like these have access to proper treatment. Currently, the waiting list for assessment and treatment for addiction services is months long—certainly unacceptable, months long.

What's the government doing to change this? I'd like to know what they're doing to change this. Ontarians who are addicted to these kinds of drugs will not simply stop being addicted without any help. They need the help. The government must be prepared to do the hard work of ensuring a full range of assessment and treatment services in addition to the work of preventing access. Only when we work on all these pieces together will actual progress be made in combating addiction to prescription drugs.

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All these different, complex, significant contributions have to be addressed for us to be able to deal with this properly. There is a lot of pieces to the puzzle, but until the puzzle is completed, many people are going to go without help.

The issue of methadone clinics: In spite of the drastic increase of opioid addiction in Ontario—and methadone is one of the primary treatments of this addiction—the number of methadone programs has not kept pace. There are huge variances across Ontario in terms of access. There is an absence of culturally appropriate treatment programs for the First Nations communities and a lack of holistic treatment services such as counselling and primary care.

Addictions are complex and there is not one approach that works for all people. The fact that so many Ontarians do not have access to a primary care provider, that counselling services are not funded and methadone and other treatment programs are so unevenly distributed across the province are all issues requiring immediate action.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, Bill 101 needs to be clarified. It needs implementation, evaluation and treatment services to be detailed. We need to ensure opposition input into the regulations and comprehensive public hearings before any part of this bill can be supported.

We certainly support any help that can be put out there. This is a start. We certainly wouldn't stand in the way of any help that people with addictions have out there. We certainly want to see this progress faster. But I cannot emphasize enough that once again, as I look across the floor, and we go into committees and we have presentations, that this government seriously needs to understand and take advice and amendments from the opposition; in the whole three years I've been here, I'd say that less than 1% is even looked at or accepted in committee. There have been a lot of excellent ideas go by the wayside at committee level because the government of the day will not listen to the opposition or all the other people who make wonderful presentations at committee level. They seem to have their minds made up before

they go in there. It's unfortunate. Until that mentality changes, a lot of people in Ontario are going to continue to suffer financially, psychologically and physically.

We need changes in this province, and it's time the government started listening to the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'd like to discuss—actually, I was going to do 20 minutes; I see I'm only going to do two minutes. I guess I just want to respond and congratulate the member. I certainly appreciate his support on Bill 101, the Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances.

We appreciate his support and that of all other members in this House who recognize the importance of this endeavour, so that we can control the growing number of people who are suffering as a result of the narcotics issue in our province.

I'll speak a little bit more to this in due course.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to see you back in the chair today—every Wednesday.

It's a privilege for me to be able to add my voice to this debate. I'd like to congratulate our critic, Christine Elliott, the deputy leader of the PC caucus and the PC Party, for her work on this. Of course, the PC Party will be supporting this legislation.

It's only a first step, however, toward the resolution of what we feel is a multi-faceted problem. I think most members in this chamber would agree that we need to do more as a society to prevent drug problems and narcotics problems and that we have to move fast and quickly for safety and awareness, and that's why we're supporting this. But again, it's a first step.

Our colleague Ms. Elliott believes, and we support this view, that the narcotics strategy must balance both the need to prevent prescription drug abuses but also the right of sufferers of chronic pain to gain access to medication for legitimate purposes. I think that's key in this.

We agree in the PC caucus with the underlying principles of the bill, but we would ask for full committee hearings, including hearings in northern Ontario and in aboriginal communities, in order to make sure that we understand the full parameters of the bill and that all stakeholders are given an opportunity to fully comment on this as we move forward.

With that, I'll listen intently and look forward to my colleague Mr. O'Toole from Durham speaking to this bill further on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus. To date, our colleague from Whitby—Oshawa has done an incredible job, and I'd also like to congratulate both her and my colleague from Dufferin—Caledon for the work they've done with mental health awareness. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I had an opportunity downstairs to watch my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek as he gave his speech. I came up the stairs, so I did miss a couple of minutes—the time between my office and here.

I want to commend him for what he had to say here today. He has indicated that it is the position of our caucus to support this bill at second reading, but the more important thing is what is going to happen when this bill gets to committee.

He was very clear in what he had to say about the frustration, sometimes, of committee work. Having been here for some nine years, I can only echo how frustrating it is, on occasion, to go to committee with good ideas that you think will strengthen a bill—people come forward to the committee who have excellent ideas—only to see that the majority on the committee will not accept them. It's not the majority of the committee; it's always the majority of government members who will not accept these new ideas or deviations from what was written in the first place.

My colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek talked about that, and about how they seem to have already made up their minds. I hope this is not the case on this bill, because this is a very complex bill dealing with people with drug addiction and you have to be able to get it right. I would hope, when this goes to committee, that the committee hears from people across this province and perhaps even travels the bill and goes to locations that might not ordinarily get here. I'm thinking, in particular, about First Nations communities in the Far North, where OxyContin and other things are endemic.

I would hope that the government listens to people like pharmacists, doctors, social workers, former addicts and law enforcement officials, all of whom will have something to say on this bill and all of whom are in agreement that this bill is a good first step. But we need to make sure we get it right, and the only way we are going to get it right is to listen to each other. I'm asking for the government members to do so in committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to respond. I'd like to thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for outlining so many of the statistics and pointing out that this is an extraordinarily serious problem that has just grown like Topsy over the last few years. In particular, the evidence does show that the majority of drugs that are being improperly used are actually coming from prescriptions by physicians, which is precisely why this legislation is before the House, so we can have the authority to capture that data about prescriptions and dispensing and doctors, and patients who are getting multiple prescriptions—all those ways of abusing what start off as legal drugs.

In fact, however, there has been something called the Narcotics Advisory Panel working on this issue for a year. It has recommended a narcotics strategy that the Minister of Health has accepted, which includes, in addition to the legislated piece—the narcotics tracking

system—working with pharmacists on education and changing their dispensing patterns. It includes working with physicians' education and changing their prescribing patterns. It includes working with patients, in particular young people, to understand the danger of this. It includes looking at our addiction treatment centres and making sure we have the capacity to treat people who are addicted to prescription drugs.

As has been mentioned, there has been a Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions and the Minister's Advisory Group on Mental Health and Addictions. We have done enough talking. We need to act.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response? The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the other members for their comments. It appears we have some common ground on this, which is a very important thing to the people of Ontario.

It's been brought to my attention on occasion that sometimes even the physicians give the patients who are leaving the hospital too many pills and sometimes over-prescribe, and that's not good either, so we have to monitor that a little better. Over the years, there have been certain physicians that it's easier to get things off of than it is others. Others prefer the natural path, the natural way, and others feel, because of the intensity of the patient kind of insisting that they get some help, that they may have been able to handle a little more pain on their own without this assistive drug that hopefully they don't get addicted to when they take it from an over-prescription, and that has to be addressed.

I think these types of guidelines, if, as my colleague said, they listen to some of the submissions from the other side, the opposition, would probably come together with a little more effective bill. Certainly we would never stand in the way of improving the health and well-being of the people of Ontario and less dependency on narcotics.

I certainly think they have their use at certain times in the life experience, but there are other times when I think that they are over-prescribed, and I think a lot of our youth don't need these types of things to assist them through the pain system. I think a little pain here and there certainly builds character. When I was growing up, I certainly didn't have access to any major things other than Aspirin. I kind of bit the bullet and suffered a bit, but you know what? I don't think it made me any weaker.

Now there are pills for everything. They want to put you to sleep; they want to make sure you're regular. There are pills for everything. You almost feel like the million-dollar man. It's embarrassing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances.

The abuse of prescription narcotic drugs or painkillers has emerged as a public health and safety issue in jurisdictions around the world, as explained by many members here in this House. Unfortunately, here in Canada, Ontario has the highest level of narcotics use among all of the provinces on a per capita basis. Abuse of prescription narcotics is a crisis that we will not accept. We need to reduce the abuse so that people who need pain relief get it, but in the right doses and for the right length of time.

We're taking action by launching our narcotics strategy. Let me explain again the key elements of the narcotics strategy: (1) a proposed monitoring database and proposed legislation; (2) partnering with the health care sector to educate on appropriate prescribing; (3) partnering with the health care sector to educate on appropriate dispensing; (4) education to prevent excessive use of prescription narcotics; and (5) treatment of addictions.

Narcotics abuse is a problem in Ontario, as we all agree. It's a social problem, it's a health problem and it's an economic problem. I think it's fair to say that we all recognize that it's a problem and that the time has come for us to act.

I know we have a concerned citizen here today who's witnessing our proceedings, Mr. Darryl Tempest, who's paying attention intently to the work we do. I'm proud to stand in support of Bill 101. It takes a responsible approach to the problem of narcotic abuse.

Let's provide some background. The inappropriate use or abuse and the diversion of prescription narcotics has emerged as an imminent public health and safety issue in Canada, the United States and jurisdictions around the world, as we have explained. The problem first surfaced in the US in the mid-1990s. The problem then in Atlantic Canada arrived in the early 2000s, and Canada has emerged as the world's top per capita consumer of narcotics, based in large part on lax and inconsistent control measures across this country. Abusing prescription narcotics is now the predominant form of illicit drug use, more than heroin and other street drugs.

What are narcotics? We've talked about opioids, commonly referred to as narcotics. These are those drugs that relieve pain. Oxy—oxycodone—

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Oxycodone.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Yes—morphine, codeine, fentanyl and methadone are all examples of opioids.

There are two types of oral opioids: short-acting and long-acting. Percocet and Tylenol 3 are examples of short-acting medications. OxyContin is one example of a long-acting pain medication, and it contains oxycodone.

Narcotics are among the most potent meds available for treatment of moderate to severe pain. For example, one 80-milligram OxyContin pill has the same amount of oxycodone as 16 Percocet pills.

Two hundred milligrams of morphine equivalent is recommended as the upper dose required for most patients.

Interjection.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm referring to the doctor in the room to give me some advice here.

But that's the same amount of oxycodone as 32 Percocets. Bottom line: It's a very powerful drug, and we have to monitor it very effectively.

Prescriptions in Ontario, though, have the following initiatives.

Escalating utilization: Between 1991 and 2009, prescriptions for oxycodone-containing products rose by more than 900% in Ontario, far more rapidly than any other opioid within the ODB. The ministry spent \$156 million on narcotics in 2009-10 for ODB beneficiaries. Between 2004 and 2009, a staggering \$652 million was spent on opioids, and 35% of that, or \$227 million, was spent on OxyContin. Over the past five years, ODB recipient utilization of oxycodone-containing products has also skyrocketed by 193%.

Escalating abuse: a 100% increase in narcotics abuse-related admissions to publicly funded treatment and addiction services in Ontario alone between 2004-05 and 2008-09. The majority of these individuals were less than 35 years of age, unemployed and referred to treatment by others.

CAMH also reported that a large proportion of oxycodone prescriptions of patients it admitted were acquired illegally, either from the street—almost 21%—and/or through a combination of prescriptions and the street—about 26%. Other prescriptions were obtained legally through physician prescriptions—only 37%.

Bottom line: Approximately 10,000 ODB recipients are being prescribed prescription narcotics in doses that exceed clinical guidelines, which is 200 milligrams per day.

Worse still, there are escalating deaths: 3,406 narcotics-related deaths in Ontario occurred between 1991 and 2004. Of those, the manner of death deemed by the coroner was unintentional overdose in 54% of cases and suicide in 24% of the cases.

Over the same time frame, narcotics-related mortality doubled, from 13.7 per million to 27.2 per million in 2004.

Since 2004, the number of oxycodone-related deaths in Ontario has nearly doubled, as I think has been referred to in this House. That's a 416% increase from 1999 to 2004.

This data strongly suggests that increased rates of prescribing contributed significantly to narcotic-related deaths.

The median age of patients who had a narcotic-related death was 40, indicating that the potential years of life lost due to narcotic-related deaths is very high.

Then, of course, there's escalating crime. According to police intelligence, prescription narcotics have become a highly lucrative street commodity, resulting in diversion that is widespread and trafficked by both individuals and organized crime groups.

Between 2005 and 2008, prescription drug arrests and charges have increased exponentially, by 99% and 197%, respectively, in arrests and charges.

ODB data indicates that double- and multiple-doctoring and polypharmacy are occurring at a significant rate. In 2007-08, 21% of ODB recipients visited two to three physicians and 3.1% three or more physicians to obtain OxyContin. In the same year, 19% of recipients visited two to four pharmacies, and 0.8% visited five or more pharmacies.

This type of behaviour, which I can refer to as doctor-shopping or pharmacy-shopping, is often associated with individuals with narcotics addictions and/or who are involved in diversions.

It should be noted that federal legislation does exist for enforcement against unlawful acquisition, possession and trafficking of prescription narcotics and controlled substances, which includes double- and multiple-doctoring and polypharmacying.

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At this point, I'd like to take a moment to talk about the impact that narcotics abuse has on Ontario's economy. Our government has already taken steps to reduce drug costs. As the members know, our government recently tackled the problem of inflated generic drug prices by cutting those costs in half. Unfortunately, some members in this House chose to side with big pharmacy chains rather than Ontario patients and voted against the important initiative to save taxpayers money and reinvest in our drug system.

But as we now look at narcotics in Ontario, I think it's important to recognize the economic impact this problem has on our province. For example, I was interested to learn that in 2008-09, the Ministry of Health spent \$145 million on narcotics for ODB patients, as I've already explained. Of that, \$65 million was spent on OxyContin. The next year, 2009-10, the ministry spending on narcotics increased to \$156 million.

We also know that Ontario utilizes oxycodone two to four times more than every other province in Canada. This suggests that the problem is not only hurting those who become addicted, but also Ontario patients, as health funds that are spent on narcotics could be better spent in other areas of patient care.

Addiction also creates a cost to society. People struggling with addiction can have problems in the workplace. They have increased health needs, which clearly increase demand on our public health system, and they require community supports: OW, food banks and ODSP.

The challenges that we've faced during the global recession have reinforced that for Ontario to succeed, we need everyone at their best. That's why we've developed Ontario's first-ever poverty reduction strategy. That's why we've continued to invest in our public education system, most notably with our introduction of full-day learning for our four- and five-year-olds. And that's why we've helped thousands of Ontarians retrain for new jobs through our Second Career strategy. I see this as one more example of the government's commitment to help people perform at their best.

As I mentioned earlier, treatment of addiction is one of the key aspects of the narcotics strategy. It's vital that we

work with our health care partners to help Ontarians who become addicted to narcotics, and so I'm glad that treatment plays an important role in our government's efforts.

We in Mississauga are fortunate to host a number of pharmaceutical companies. There's Baxter Canada, for example, which every year plays a role in educating people as to the importance of kidney health on World Kidney Day. Last year, they told me that an estimated 500,000 Ontarians are at risk of developing chronic kidney disease, and they continue to reinforce the importance of talking to our health care providers about getting screened.

I was pleased that in consulting with the industry prior to making my remarks today, they told me that they are supportive of oversight of narcotics and that they believe in the importance of the right care at the right time. They feel, as I'm sure we all did, that what's important in this debate is that we protect public safety and get maximum value for public health care dollars.

So we're talking about a bill that is first and foremost about public safety. It's about preventing addictions and treating those already addicted. But it's also the right thing to do for our economy. It can save millions of precious health care dollars by reducing the number of prescriptions and preventing addictions from forming in the first place. It can help people get back into the workforce and, again, by preventing addictions, prevent extended absences. And it has the support of Ontario's pharmaceutical industry.

Legislation under our narcotics strategy would, if passed, create a new database that would track all our narcotics and controlled substances dispensed in Ontario. An electronic database will enable the Ministry of Health to collect, monitor and analyze information related to prescription narcotics and other controlled substances and identify patterns of inappropriate or excessive prescribing or dispensing, and it implements a province-wide system of alerts when attempts to visit multiple pharmacies are detected. We've got to stop the doctor-shopping and the pharmacy-shopping.

In instances of inappropriate activity, responses could include educational support and resources, reporting to the appropriate regulatory college, and, in extreme circumstances, law enforcement. The database will build greater accountability for both health care professionals and patients and will ultimately serve to improve health care delivery, increase patient safety and enhance patient outcomes.

It's important to reinforce some important statistics. Between 1991 and 2009, prescriptions for narcotics containing oxycodone, like Percocet and OxyContin, rose by more than 900%. Since 2004, the number of oxycodone-related deaths in Ontario nearly doubled. Narcotics-abuse-related admissions to publicly funded treatment and addiction services in Ontario doubled from 2004 to 2008. OxyContin utilization is two to four times higher in Ontario than in all other provinces. The ministry spent \$145 million on narcotics in 2009; of this, 45% was spent on OxyContin. The ministry spent \$156 million on narcotics for over 600,000 Ontario drug benefit program

recipients in 2009-10, for 3.9 million prescriptions. This equates to over six prescriptions per person and an annual cost of \$260 per person.

Police report that narcotics containing oxycodone have become popular trafficked drugs by both individuals and organized crime, and charges and arrests in connection with these activities have skyrocketed.

Finally, the misuse and abuse of prescription narcotics, particularly those containing oxycodone, has reached such alarming levels in First Nations communities, as referenced by my friend here across the way, and in communities across Ontario that some have declared it a state of emergency. These drugs are being overprescribed and they are being overused. And they are being obtained illegally and sold on street for profit, while the people who buy them are getting sick and dying.

Let me conclude. Nobody who legitimately needs painkillers needs to worry about this initiative. The overall strategy addresses misuse of prescription narcotics and ensures their safe and appropriate use by patients with medical needs and the professionals prescribing them. These drugs are being overprescribed and they're being overused, and it's important to say it again and again to recognize the negative impacts that we're facing. They're being obtained illegally and sold on the street for profit while the people who buy them, again, are getting sick and are dying.

This situation cannot be allowed to continue. That's why our government is taking strong action to save lives and improve health outcomes for Ontarians by stopping abuse, addiction, and diversion of narcotics and controlled substances while ensuring that patients who need pain treatment get it.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak, and I'll pass it over to you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: Today is a day where you have a very informative debate. I want to comment on the member from Mississauga South, who was sticking closely to the information, which is fairly technical in nature, and also consulting with his colleague, who is a doctor and is unfortunately not the Minister of Health, which would make sense.

Really, the important points he's making—I would hope to repeat some of them in my few minutes in the next round of remarks. But I think if I was to look at a source of pride, I'd have to say that members of this House from all sides participated in the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, which I think made a very broad and profound statement about—and was perhaps the genesis of Bill 101, to be quite frank. I want to personally give a lot of thanks to the co-operative nature of the members on the select committee. Having in the past been on a select committee, I know that often their work is productive and comes out of a very genuine concern to fix a problem, and that would be the case here.

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The Chair, Kevin Flynn—I should give his riding properly here; he's from Oakville. The member from

Oakville as well as the member from Whitby—Oshawa, as Vice-Chair, authored a report. That report, which I'm looking at, is called *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*. In that report, there are sections, and I'll try to cover some of this in my remarks later on, that advocated very strongly—and our critic, Christine Elliott, who was, as I mentioned, the Vice-Chair of that committee, made excellent remarks—but also very collegially, respecting the real work of the House here in trying to move forward. They've made some strong recommendations, and this goes part way. It's a good first step, and I think that's where we are today as we agree on the first step.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Earlier this afternoon, we heard the erudite discourse of the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. Now we hear from the Liberal member for Mississauga South. We're going to hear from the member from Beaches—East York before the afternoon is over.

There's a soft, fuzzy feeling in the chamber, with everybody agreeing and holding hands and burning incense and perhaps singing Kumbaya about the scourge of narcotics addiction, but read the bill. It does so little. It doesn't permit the minister to convey any of the information that they may acquire to, for instance, the College of Physicians and Surgeons so that the College of Physicians and Surgeons can investigate and commence, if need be, disciplinary proceedings against a physician who is overprescribing or inappropriately prescribing. The bill doesn't permit the minister to inform the regulatory body of pharmacists that a pharmacist may be inappropriately dispensing or not utilizing appropriate diligence.

The only thing the bill does is allow the minister to collect information from a doctor and a pharmacist, and it allows that minister, the ministry, to convey that information back to doctors and pharmacists. There are no investigative powers beyond that. There's no power on the part of the ministry to discipline. There's no power on the part of the ministry to advise the College of Physicians and Surgeons or the regulatory body of pharmacists.

Does this lay the groundwork for possibly some effective policing? Perhaps. But to argue that this is effective policing is not accurate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate. The comments from my colleague the member from Mississauga South were, I think, very well received by the House. Previous speakers have told us that this is an issue that has been around since the 1900s. All parties have had the opportunity to take action on this, and for a variety of reasons those actions haven't been taken.

I think it's great to hear the comments from the member from Durham, which I think were offered in a very collegial way, that we need to work together to get a

grip on this issue and that most members, if not all members of the House, if we get right down to it, really agree that this is a good step forward. There may be a bit of a disagreement as to how big a step it is, but certainly it is a step in the right direction.

We all know that there's some excellent pain relief that can result from those people who suffer pain on a daily basis properly using opioids, and I think that that's something where we have to be careful that we don't discourage their use in a proper form. But we've seen all too often, and we heard all too often when we toured the province with the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, both the tragic and indeed the fatal circumstances that can surround the misuse. This affects the urban areas of our community. It affects the rural communities that we have in Ontario as well. Certainly the select committee saw first-hand the devastation that it can cause in our First Nations communities.

Some members of the select committee are in the House today. France Gélinas isn't with us, but certainly the member from Guelph, the member from Oak Ridges—Markham and the member from Peterborough are. All of us worked together, and I think we're all happy to see such quick action on a recommendation resulting from the select committee. There are 22 other recommendations there that still need to be worked on.

If this is any indication as to the seriousness with which our recommendations are being treated by the government, I think it's a sign that gives us some cause for optimism.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Notwithstanding the comments by my friend from Welland, which I will be taking a closer look at—and it certainly does concern me if a bill leaves out, by sin of omission, taking care of business, as they say, as it should be done. Part of the process of trying to reduce the overuse of opiates such as OxyContin and Percocet must lie in the policing of those very bodies that are part of that process—the prescribing and the dispensing. It must include ways of ensuring that those two components have controls placed on them and have enforcement on their activities as well.

This is a huge problem and it is a good start by the government. These products—I've had some experience in my own riding. I won't get into it today with this two-minute hit, but I'll just tell you about my own situation when I was in the Ottawa Hospital a couple of years ago to have my hip replaced. Of course, OxyContin was available to me. I didn't take it, but I only had to witness the gentleman who was directly across from me in the room, who was terribly addicted to it. Every time he wanted more, he got more because of the addiction and the situation that he was in. I think I only took the Tylenols the first day after the hip replacement, because I looked at that and said, "My God, a life wasted because of addiction to narcotics." That is something that we can't see continue to happen in this province. This will be a good first start, but there is much more to be done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Mississauga South, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the member for Durham, the member for Welland, the member from Oakville and the member for Renfrew. The member for Durham spoke about the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions report, and I'd like to quote one of the recommendations made here, number 11: "The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should immediately address the problem of addiction to prescription painkillers," which is being done today.

I also acknowledge the member for Welland, and I too am encouraged by the collaborative effort that this House has had in presenting this bill and the common cause of agreement that we all share in getting this to a resolution.

The member from Oakville was very kind to acknowledge the members of the select committee that brought this forward, and I too would like to take the opportunity to congratulate them, from all parties, on the work they've done in getting this thing put forward. It's so important.

To the member from Renfrew, we also wish you well in your recovery from your hip. You've done a great job; you're walking well and you stayed away from narcotic drugs in this House. More importantly, his point is very well taken. We've got to be very concerned about how we address these issues, and collaboratively, we will take action to address them and reduce the reliance on narcotic drugs in our province, to ensure that all Ontarians have a safe environment and to ensure more effectively that we take the proper steps to curb the action that is being put forward. All of us here agree that that is needed, and I am very encouraged by that participation and that collaborative effort.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: This is a bill that—I will try not to stray too far from the central themes, but at the same time, much of what's being said here by all parties is repeated using slightly different emphasis, I suppose.

I want to start by looking at the bill itself. Bill 101, as the member from Welland said, is not a significantly large bill, but it's an important bill, and some would say it's an important first step. We'll make these points over the next few minutes.

I always start by looking at the preamble to the bill and the explanatory notes to really give me the theme or emphasis of the bill itself. I think it's worth repeating. This is a good start to Bill 101: "An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances."

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As has been mentioned several times, there has been a lot of work done on this. In fact, let's be quite frank: The professionals themselves have done a vast amount of work. Even the media: I can recall myself watching a program on Newfoundland about the OxyContin addiction issue and the amount of related suicides etc. But in

fairness, Ontario uses two to four times more per capita of these opiate drugs than other jurisdictions in Canada. These are the records that are kept already today by the industry as well as the pharmacists—the Ontario Pharmacists' Association—and the medical community itself.

In fact, according to a report recently prepared by the College of Physicians and Surgeons—the title of the report is *Avoiding Abuse, Achieving a Balance*. I think there's a lot of practical advice in that: avoiding abuse and achieving a balance. These opiates are basically drugs that deal with pain, short- and long-term, the different types of opiates that are out there. Achieving the balance is the rights of the individual who is suffering from pain, whether it's an accident, trauma of some sort or whatever. Being able to have the resources to provide it in the right amount at the right time for the right reasons is important for people dealing with pain. And we've all, as members here, dealt with people in our offices who are suffering from accidents and need to have that available to them.

Their remarks here on that: "There has been a steep and unprecedented increase in the number of individuals seeking treatment for oxycodone addiction since controlled-release (long-acting) oxycodone products became available in 1995. The number of admissions at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) medical withdrawal management service seeking treatment for opioid detoxification related to controlled release oxycodone went from 3.8% of opioid admissions in 2000 to 55.4% in 2004"—just to give you some idea of how expanded this is.

Then you get into the whole expense issue, which has been mentioned by almost all speakers. I think it's important and worth repeating that between 2009 and 2010, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care spent \$156 million on narcotics for the Ontario drug benefit program for 3.9 million prescriptions. That amounts to \$260 per person. One would wonder, when you compare that statistically to other jurisdictions, if it's an appropriate thing that's being dealt with in this way by ease of access to prescribing.

But then you look at other jurisdictions. What have they done already? This is a good lesson for us today. Are we behind the ball or in front of the ball on this one? I put to you that perhaps we're a little bit late in responding. We all like to criticize our neighbours and friends in the United States, but in the United States, 41 states have enacted legislation for prescribing drug monitoring and programs related to it. Nova Scotia has a program, which is being followed by New Brunswick, that includes legislation, monitoring, education and support for persons and health care professionals. Other provinces, including British Columbia, Alberta and Nova Scotia, have triplicate prescription programs, and to date, both Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia have recognized a decrease in narcotic use. So we've got to take action.

The action is also very evident when you look at some of the other startling statistics, and that would be the number of unnecessary deaths that occur because of this.

The report also contains statistics concerning fatalities. Deaths due to oxycodone rose from 35 deaths—often suicidal—in 2002 to 119 in 2006. That's a 240% increase. So this is an urgent and pressing need, and this legislation and our collegial atmosphere here today is one more proof that the minister should take that signal and move quickly. Even the government, in fairness, has said, in response to Bill 101, that they're prepared to put the \$1 million to implement this program on the table.

Therein, we get into the real issue, because if you look at the work done by the group that I mentioned before—I do want to put them on the record here: The Chair was the member from Oakville, Mr. Flynn; the Vice-Chair was Christine Elliott from Whitby—Oshawa; the member from Scarborough—Rouge River, Bas Balkissoon, the member from Nickel Belt, Ms. France Gélinas, and the member from Oak Ridges—Markham—a physician, I might say—Helena Jaczek were on there. The member from Dufferin—Caledon, Sylvia Jones, and the member from Peterborough, Jeff Leal, were on the committee, as were the member from Guelph, Liz Sandals, and Maria Van Bommel as well.

My point is that they issued a report, and that report, I think, was not celebrated as it might have been in this Legislature. That's why I'm spending some time now on this report. It's *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*. This is sort of moving the topic a bit, but recognizing where we are.

Growing mental health has got different labels. Some of them are institutional labels, but I also think—I forget the senator. I think *Out of the Shadows* or *Out of the Darkness* was one of the reports issued by the Senate of Canada—Michael Kirby, I believe. It brought to light, if you will, out of the shadows, the importance and growing disease of mental illness, and it's a disease like cancer or other unappreciated health concerns. So that being said, Ms. Elliott, the member from Whitby—Oshawa, made a resolution. In reference here, the current government recognized that resolution and formed a select committee that generated this report.

Now, in the report, which has been mentioned by pretty well everyone here, each of us as members representing ridings, in my case Durham and in many cases northern communities—I've heard Mr. Bisson speak on it, and others—all have what I'd call victims in our ridings whom we've heard about or have dealt with. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that you have as well. In that, there really aren't enough resources in the province of Ontario today to deal with the mental health demands affecting families and children, First Nations; there's no group that's been isolated from this disease, this societal problem. But when you see young people—and this is where it comes to me. I've had parents in my riding—and I'll leave it at that—in my riding of Durham, three or four parents in the last year who have suffered a loss of one of their children. They called me and are so happy that the work has been done so collegially by the select committee, and they are monitoring it. They're seeing what we're going to do.

Talk is cheap. In fact, in the 11 minutes I have left on the clock, it'll only be repeating what many members, and in fact what this committee said. But it is a blueprint for us and it's a blueprint for action, and with all due respect, this bill that we're dealing with, Bill 101, is simply a first step. I could cast some negative aspersions on some of the things here. In the interests of staying positive, I'll try to avoid that.

But we have the experience. I can tell you, from my time when we were in government—I was parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health. It was a privilege and an honour etc. In fact, I had the privilege of sitting on a committee, the Smart Systems for Health, which now is called eHealth. I was aware that some time ago they had systems that track drug use. There's OLIS, the Ontario laboratories information system, which already electronically shares data between a lab and a hospital or a lab and a doctor. Pharmacists already have the ability in their systems to record specific information on drugs that are prescribed. They can almost tell you if some doctors are more predisposed to prescribe certain medications, opiates or whatever. I think it's appropriate. Every one of us should have oversight. That would include the Premier, and it would certainly include me and all members here to be accountable, especially when you look at the pressures on the system for using every dollar efficiently for the best possible outcomes for all of us in society.

But in this report that was commissioned, as I said earlier—the College of Physicians and Surgeons—I think it's probably the most significant report. I believe the Avoiding Abuse, Achieving a Balance report is probably the best reference point right now. I would support many of the recommendation in this report, Navigating the Journey to Wellness, thinking of my constituents and yours, Mr. Speaker, who are looking for a way to navigate through the mental health system.

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Often today the police are at odds. What do they do with someone who is acting out because they're off their medications? Schizophrenia is another example of that. The police are now being trained. I want to thank the former chief of police in Durham region, who set up sensitivity awareness for front-line officers. We met with Ontario Shores, which is our mental health hospital, and others, to set about setting up a training and awareness program so that they weren't simply tasing a person who was acting out, or, even worse, shooting them because they were acting out. Now they're aware that these things happen and how more appropriately to deal with them. Sensitivity is important, because it's a disease, it's an illness. Let's be straightforward about it.

I think this report is another part—as I said, Out of the Shadows is one; the physicians and surgeons' report is another report. This is one more report. The work that the committee did—it's my understanding that they attended some First Nations communities, they conducted business for over a year, and I believe that their work is commendable and worth reading, and I would refer it to the people listening or reading Hansard.

There is a consolidated list of recommendations. Number one is the umbrella organization which is coordinating. It's the facilitating of people's access point to the system. Being diagnosed with a particular disease or illness is important, and referral patterns and what actions and what services are available. Specifically, as has been mentioned many times, is recommendation 11: "The Ministry of Health and Long-Term are should immediately address the problem of addiction to prescription painkillers." There it is, and that's what this particular bill deals with.

It sets up a number of functions, and I think if you look at the bill, it tells you clearly. It says:

"The act seeks to improve the health and safety of Ontarians by permitting the monitoring, analyzing and reporting of information, including personal information, related to the prescribing and dispensing of monitored drugs in order to:

"1. Contribute to and promote appropriate prescribing and dispensing practices for monitored drugs in order to support access to monitored drugs for medically appropriate treatment, including treatment for pain.

"2. Identify and reduce the abuse, misuse and diversion of monitored drugs.

"3. Reduce the risk of addiction and death resulting from the abuse or misuse of monitored drugs."

Those are laudable objectives and I think they should be fairly easily achieved with co-operation from the minister as well as the prescribers and users of the medication. And, as it said in that other report, finding the balance so that it's not so restrictive that certain people who suffer from pain through no fault of their own—failed surgery, car accident, you name it—can have access to medication; and controlling that, so that they can see, there is Mr. X or Mrs. X monthly getting a dose of 30 pills and that's what they're prescribed, and they can tie all this information together so that they know they're not selling them.

If you look at the cost of drugs today, we need to do this across the board. Quite frankly, most medication today is quite expensive. Some pills are \$100 or more per tablet. How much more can the Ontario drug benefit plan actually afford? In fact, many of the drugs that are prescribed today aren't listed on the formulary and people have to pay out of their pocket. We see, with some of the new, innovative medications for osteoporosis or cancer, that they're not on the formulary and they're not paid for by the province.

The only drugs that the province pays for today—drugs are basically paid out of your pocket unless you're a senior or on ODBA or covered under Trillium. Those are the only three ways that the province actually pays. Most of it is paid for by employer benefit plans. So when these things come out in front of us, we have a very—we don't have a national plan for dealing with prescription medications or, more importantly, medications like the ones we're talking about, but certainly we should be controlling, monitoring and measuring them.

There are a couple of question marks here. Let's just bring these up. These are important: about the power of

the minister to appoint. We should make sure they're qualified people, those people who are familiar with opiates and other things that are in these lists—they aren't political appointments, I hope; I hope not, that's for sure. The minister is going to appoint these people.

The act requires a prescriber to record specific information on prescriptions for monitored drugs. So now they're forcing drug companies to do certain things. Well, they should be compensated for that.

Access: Who can have access to it? Who can they release the information to? It comes under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which has a lot to say with what goes on here. Some of this stuff is sharing information with enforcement people. They wouldn't know one drug from an Aspirin. In most cases, unless they're specifically trained to know what, in fact, they're talking about and what information they are actually giving to some other branch of their policing or reporting on a pharmacist's business—you need to have qualified people, and you are dealing with sensitive information on people's lives.

Because someone could be stopped, maybe at night, and they find OxyContin in their pocket, does that automatically mean the person's going to jail? These are the questions that I think—the consumers need to be protected in this business, because if you've got a legitimate prescription for pain pills, and you aren't a trafficker—how are we going to determine whether or not that officer, the person intervening, who finds this particular tablet, what protection—are they going to end up—do you understand? There need to be some rights of the consumer here as well.

I say that very broadly, that it's very important that the consumer part of this is not ignored. It's sort of like the acting out with tasers and stuff like that. There should be clear rules on that kind of stuff because not every politician is straightforward and falls into every category, I guess.

But I would say that this bill is something that we should be endorsing, encouraging public hearings on and making sure that it goes to northern Ontario to those remote communities where we see that suicide among young people is at an epidemic proportion, and I would say that the work being done by the select committee, the minister's action in this report and the House standing firmly behind it, as well as the College of Pharmacists and the College of Physicians and Surgeons, seem to be in agreement.

I do believe that public hearings would be appropriate and necessary to deal with the point of view of those persons who may be on prescribed medications, that their rights are respected. And it goes back, as I said at the very beginning of my remarks—I would have a close look at the report from the College of Physicians and Surgeons called *Avoiding Abuse, Achieving a Balance*. That abuse can be achieved by the prescribing doctor who sees it as a solution to all pain, or by the pharmacist who is maybe not counting or dispensing properly—I'm not suggesting anything—or by the consumer. So all of

the parties in that transaction may need the pain medication or may not need the pain medication. The doctor, the pharmacist and the physician are the experts. They're held to a standard of their college, and the consumer has a right and a responsibility as well.

I think we should give this bill the time that it needs and move forward as quickly as possible. I'd urge the Minister of Health to move. There's a life out there that could be saved by your action or could be caused by your lack of action.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Durham. It seems like every time I'm in this House, the member from Durham is up doing extra duty there. He's always in front of that set. I don't know how he does it, but he's up a lot. And I must confess, he certainly likes to analyze the bills at hand, which is a good quality.

I'd like to reiterate one of the parts of the submission that I made: "Ontario's current crisis of narcotics abuse is about the lack of appropriate pain management services and a failure in this province to ensure that every Ontarian has a primary care provider. It is about addictions and a lack of treatment services. It is about the failure to institute comprehensive, secure electronic health records and electronic prescriptions. It's about the lack of professional collaboration and interdisciplinary care. It's about a lack of education, especially impartial education by non-pharmaceutical educators, for our health professionals."

1650

I am also very concerned about the fact that, in a lot of cases, I'm not sure pharmaceutical companies do enough research on some of these products that come out, because I can recall that over the past few years, and correct me if I'm wrong, there have been many recalls. Many drugs that have caused irreparable damage to some of the citizens of our province have been taken off the market.

Research is important. Diagnostic experiments are important. It's also important that they make sure these trials are done properly and for the period required. It's not always good to rush to the front of the line just to get a product out there to make all kinds of money off people without knowing the final outcome. If this is one step toward that endeavour, we certainly will support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise again to respond to the comments from the member from Durham. I will say from the outset that he sent me a very nice letter congratulating the committee, a very supportive letter passing comment on the work of the committee. Certainly I'd have to pass some of that credit on to some members of his own caucus. The member for Whitby-Oshawa and the member for Dufferin-Caledon put a lot of work and a lot of effort into the report that was issued and I know brought the same dedication to the report that he thinks so highly of as any other member.

We put in a lot of hours over the summer, and we analyzed the report word by word. So every word in that report has been gone over a few times.

In recommendation 11—unlike the other recommendations, which I think members of the opposition were quite reasonable about—you'll notice the word "immediately." That word was put in there on purpose. That word was put in because we realized that a crisis was upon us in prescription drug abuse and that the ministry needed to act very, very quickly in this regard. So it's no accident that the word "immediately" is in.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek raises some good concerns about privacy around this. We're also seeing organized crime start to enter into the field of prescription drug abuse sales and illegal use.

This, to me, is one of the more refreshing debates I've seen in the House for some time, or perhaps even ever, in that it appears that all members are offering constructive suggestions as to how to make a good first step an even better first step. I think that can't help but result in the sort of legislation that the people of Ontario expect this Legislature to pass on a regular basis. So I'd like to commend the speaker from Durham for his comments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to echo my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek's comments about the diligence of my colleague from Durham and his ability and his quality of debate here. We can always count on the member from Durham to know every bill in this chamber from front to back. It's his thorough knowledge and understanding of these bills that he brings to this House each and every day, and I want to commend him for that.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, I've spoken previously to this Bill 101 to say that the Progressive Conservative caucus will be supporting this legislation. It is our hope that there will be hearings across the province, in the north and also in aboriginal communities throughout the province, so that we can actually get a full grasp, a full handle on how this bill and how the legal types of narcotics are actually impacting people's lives across the province.

It's a good first step. We think that it's imperative that there's further consultation, however, and because of that, we are calling on the Liberals to ensure that we do speak to people, not just in this chamber and not just from the city of Toronto, the province's capital, but throughout the communities. Whether that's in my city of Ottawa, whether that is up north or to the southwest, it's important that we get these types of bills right, because they deal with the health and safety of our constituents. So I'd like to again thank my colleague from Durham for once again providing valuable information and very insightful information in a debate.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Durham, and, as has already been said, he generally does a lot of research on the things on which he wishes to speak. But I want to comment on a statement that he made, because it's very true, and we don't say enough of what he had to say in this House, and that is, all members of this House have a great obligation to work on behalf of the people of this province, and the all-party select committee did a good job.

In fact, I believe that we have much need of many more all-party select committees. It's not enough to send them to the regular committees of the House, because they are quite partisan and oftentimes they reflect government bills where the government has already made up their mind, and very few amendments or new ideas that are brought forward actually make it into the legislation.

But there is a fundamental difference when an all-party select committee is struck. It is struck with the intent of going out and actually finding out information. It's not struck around a particular bill or government initiative; it's struck around finding out information and giving the best possible advice to the Legislature, to the government, to the people of Ontario.

In this particular case the all-party Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions did exactly that: They travelled, they worked, they got along together, and they issued a joint report. All parties signed off on it. I know that my own colleague from Nickel Belt was very proud to be part of that committee, and I saw her front and centre as the pictures were being taken and as things were spoken about. She came to our caucus, she explained what was being done, and in the end, every member of this House needs to be proud of what happened. To my colleague from Oakville: As Chair, you did a good job. I'll say that right here in this House.

But what we need to do is expand upon that experience and learn how to set these committees up so that we can work together for the benefit of the people of Ontario.

To the member from Durham: Thanks for bringing this up in your speech.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that's the first time in 15 years that I actually haven't upset someone by my remarks, but we'll work on that. We are improving. It just seems I have to stick around for another couple of terms to learn how to do this.

I want to thank personally the members from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and Beaches–East York, as well as the member from Oakville and of course my colleague from Nepean–Carleton: all of them humbling remarks that are mostly true about what I do.

But the point is that we are all in agreement here, and I always look to the next steps. What are the next steps to move it forward? The committee has done their work, worked collegially, and have a unanimous report. The minister now has the ball, and the Premier and cabinet, to

allocate the resources. I would expect that public consultations into something this important are absolutely critical, because in the first drafting, most of the legislative counsel staff and the people in the Ministry of Health and in addiction services probably did submit input on this, but I guess the question that remains is to get it right. Some of the recent things that have been implemented, whether it's the eco tax and that, may have been rushed out the door, but this is one they've got to get right.

All members on all sides of the House have done their homework to the extent that they would recognize it in their communities. They know people within their families or their ridings where this is actually going to be helpful. The work of the committee should not go without prompt attention in respect to the work that they did over the long, hot summer that we all had.

With that, I think we could easily ask that the minister, or the House leader, for that matter, now take the appropriate steps to deal with this.

The one thing I want to say is: Always remember the consumer, because the medication was invented to deal with pain, and that, at the end of the day, is what this is about.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It is again my pleasure and my honour to stand up here and speak to this particular bill. I may not use my whole 20 minutes, and I say that because I think that most of what needs to be said on this bill has already been said.

What has been said on this bill is congratulatory to the members of the Legislature who took the time over this summer to get together in the all-party select committee to make recommendations. Most of what has been said on this bill is contained within the body of information sent to us by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. Most of what is in this bill is going to help lay the framework to do the larger service we need to do for the people of Ontario.

1700

I am going to take a few minutes to talk first of all about the necessity of moving this bill forward. I am absolutely convinced that when this bill gets called and the vote is taken, if it's by voice vote, you're not going to hear a nay. If there is a nay, it will only be because somebody will want to have a recorded vote so that everyone can vote for it. I see heads shaking over there, and I know that's a possibility. But when the vote comes, and if it's recorded, every single person will stand in their seat and vote for it.

But I can also be assured, and the government should be assured, that when that happens, something else is going to happen. The Speaker is going to ask, "Shall this be referred for third reading?" and there is going to be a chorus of noes. That is because we expect—on the opposition side, at least—that this will go to committee. I want to talk about the committee and what it needs to do.

This is not a bill that can simply be slam-dunked: "Here it is." We need to consult and we need to make sure that we do it right. It is only one of 31 recommendations that were made by the College of Physicians and Surgeons in their groundbreaking report, but we need to make sure it is done right. We need to make sure that we consult with all the people who may be affected, be they pharmacists, be they doctors, be they former drug addicts. We need to listen to them—don't ever think we don't need to listen to them—on how they got caught in the web and the trap of illegal narcotics or even legal narcotics that were wrongly prescribed. We need to listen to social workers, we need to listen to law enforcement officials and we need especially to listen to the First Nations people.

It is my understanding—and I have nothing except statistics to go on, on this—that the rate of illegal drug use in some First Nations communities is endemic, and that it is much higher than in other places in Ontario. We need to listen to them. We need to get their sage advice on how these drugs made it into sometimes remote communities—whether it was doctor- or nurse-assisted, whether it was illegal stuff, whether it was people flying in and out—how they got hooked or how they remain hooked, what kinds of concerns it is causing in their communities and what kinds of services they require to get off the use of those drugs. Speaker, I am asking the government—I know you have some additional speakers—to indicate, to give this House a clue to where the government comes on the thinking on what is going to happen with this bill.

It will go to committee, because I know there will be some noes for third reading. We know that. It's going to committee. But what does the government intend to do with this committee? The government has the authority, the muscle and the votes on the subcommittee and on the committee to determine whether it's one day of hearings or two days of hearings; whether it travels outside; how many people are going to be heard; how it's going to be advertised. All of that is done in a subcommittee, but the committee itself is made up of a majority of government members. We need to hear from a government member. We need to hear from somebody who has consulted with his or her colleagues on what the government intends to do.

Quite frankly, if somebody were to stand up and tell me at this juncture that there are going to be three or four days of hearings, including, possibly and probably and I hope, one day of public hearings in a First Nations community—it doesn't have to be in the Far North; it can be anywhere in southern Ontario where there is an addiction problem in a First Nation community—to hear the wise and sage advice of their elders on how we can best and most culturally deal with that problem, then I, for one, will say that a couple of days of hearings and an on-site visit to a First Nation may be sufficient to assuage any fears that we on the opposition side have, to ensure that the government is taking the right track. I am hoping somebody is going to stand up and say that. I don't think

we're asking for a lot, but we are asking for some kind of assurance that this bill is going to be given the credibility it deserves and that people are going to have input.

I want to hear from police. I want to hear how the changes to the law may assist them or not assist them. I want to hear from doctors and physicians, too.

Just a few other comments that I have on this bill: There is a crisis because people—as my colleague so brilliantly put it, when he was a kid the only thing he ever got when he was hurting was an Aspirin. Today there are drugs for just about anything, so you sometimes never know, in fact, what you're getting. If you find yourself in pain and all you're thinking about is for the pain to go away, you don't know what doctors are giving you.

I want to recount my own experience—not in this country, not in this province, but a couple of years ago when I was on vacation in Mexico. Some of you will remember that I came back with a broken arm. It hurt like hell the day I broke it. I was out fishing, the waves got too high, I fell over in the boat and I broke my arm—the top half. There was nothing much they could do. They took me from the boat to a taxi. The taxi took me to the hotel where I had hired the fishing boat. The hotel called a local doctor. The local doctor came and said, “Your arm is definitely broken. I can give you something for the pain.”

I was naive and hurting very badly. I can tell you, the pain was excruciating. He gave me something. I have no idea what it was, but I can tell you that it worked. I can tell you that within 15 or 20 seconds I was no longer in pain. I can tell you that within a minute I was positively euphoric.

He didn't tell me what it was, but he put me in a cab to a real hospital and I went to the hospital and I sat there for an hour or two while I was X-rayed, while they were talking about other things and, quite frankly, I don't remember any pain for the rest of that day. But I do know that the next day—I was coming back to Canada—I was in considerable pain and I was offered some additional medication at the airport from Mexican officials who were trying to be ever so nice, but I declined.

When I got back to Canada and back to my home, I went to my local hospital, Toronto East General Hospital, where they are absolutely wonderful; a great hospital. I commend it to anyone who ever finds themselves in pain or with broken bones or anything else wrong. They asked me what I was given and, you know, honest to God, I had no idea. I have no idea what that was. They asked me if I wanted anything to control the pain and I told them no, because, having taken it, I was afraid that I would like it a lot. I was very worried, because it was so extremely effective, that I would be addicted. I didn't even take any Aspirin for the pain from that point on.

That was my own experience, and I'm not surprised that people who are living in pain, who have this and then have it again and again and again for the pain, like it, get addicted to it and find they can't get off it. That was my own experience. I don't know how close I came to being addicted. I don't think very close at all, but

sometimes you don't know what's happening to you when it happens. The pain can be excruciating and all you want is for it to go away.

In any event, this bill is here for a number of reasons. Again, I refer to the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. It was their report, I think, that triggered some of what is in here, along with the all-party select committee. They published a report called *Avoiding Abuse, Achieving a Balance: Tackling the Opioid Public Health Crisis*. I commend the college for this paper. It is about 40 pages long. I've only had a chance to read just the 31 recommendations, but they are substantial recommendations to tackle abuse in Ontario.

What is being done today in this bill is but one of the 31 recommendations that they made. We still have 30 others to look at. In supporting this bill, I am doing so in the full hope—perhaps not the knowledge but at least the full hope—that this government will commit itself to the remaining recommendations. The recommendations are sound. They have been made by people who I think we can trust with our health in the province of Ontario, and they will go a long way to reducing the pain that people feel and, I'm hoping, the use of opioids to control them.

1710

I have some statistics here that there are some 2.4 million to 3.6 million Ontarians who are living in chronic pain, and they are looking for solutions. The solutions do not come in pills, I would suggest; they do not come in needles; they do not come in any of the other forms that one can ingest or take into one's body. They come from having access to pain management centres.

I know a doctor; she's one of my neighbours. She lives in East York. I see her regularly at community and neighbourhood meetings. She told me once that she lives in constant pain herself. Because of that, she became a pain management specialist as a doctor. She can't take any more clients because there are so many people seeking her services. There aren't enough doctors like her to talk to people who are in constant pain, and she wishes that some more efforts were made in order to help pain management doctors, pain management clinics.

I would suggest that there aren't enough, and if there aren't enough in Toronto, think about small, rural, northern, isolated communities—all of those—and whether or not they have access to this. This may be one of the things we learn by going to First Nations communities that may be isolated, that may not have access to doctors and probably, almost definitely, don't have a local hospital, and maybe the only way that they can control the pain is by taking pills or opioids. Maybe that's it, and maybe that's why they are taking them. Maybe there's no other access. Maybe if they had some kind of doctor who was an expert in pain management, or a clinic that was an expert in pain management, they wouldn't be taking those.

We all know that other provinces have been further ahead than Ontario. We know that places like Nova Scotia, Alberta and Quebec all have chronic pain management strategies, but until now we do not. We do not,

and we need to have that. It needs to be the next part of the puzzle. After we've figured out all the drugs people are taking and why they're taking them, we need to have solutions. I am suggesting that that is something that needs to be discussed at committee, and the government needs to indicate in some way where we are heading on this file. I would suggest as well that this is one of the key places that we should be looking.

This legislation aims to reduce the supply of illicit narcotics, but we cannot simply cut off the supply without eradicating the addiction. We need to hear from people. We need to hear from doctors, lawyers, social workers, ex-drug addicts, all of those, about eradicating the addiction. When people are cut off a supply, when a doctor says, "You're not going to get any more of this; we're going to manage your pain in a different way," we need to make sure, because they like the effects of the opioid and they don't want to get off it, that they don't go out onto the streets and buy it in some other form, in some other place, import it from some other country, buy it from some other drug dealer, do whatever. We need to make sure that this is covered off as well.

We need to make sure that we do something about the current waiting list for assessment and treatment for addiction services, because right now it takes too long. I remember families coming into my constituency office about their teenage children who were addicted to drugs, some of whom had become suicidal over the addiction. Many times the drugs were not the ones that one normally associates with teenagers; it was prescription drugs, because they were very adept, if they couldn't find what they wanted in terms of narcotics, at finding prescription drugs which would have the same force and effect. The families were devastated. They were devastated that in Ontario their children could not get the kinds of treatment that were necessary, that their children had to wait four to six months when they were suicidal and depressed, and that there was nowhere for them to turn.

Every one of the families who came that day to see me had been forced to send their children out of province, and some had been forced to send them out of country, in order to get the kind of treatment that they needed in order to get off of drugs and to get their lives back together. We need to do something about that as well. I think we need to hear from those families and about the way they had to jump through hoops.

I know the former minister, Minister Smitherman, was called to one of the meetings—I arranged a meeting with the families and he met with them and talked to them about the government's commitment to one day soon, hopefully, set up some drug treatment centres in Ontario. I don't think that that has happened yet, but I am hopeful that, with the passage or the potential passage of this bill, it will.

The last thing I want to deal with—and I'm surprised that I'm speaking this long—is the whole use of methadone clinics and needle exchanges. This is a highly emotive topic. You can go anywhere in this country where needle exchanges or methadone clinics are set up

and you will have a great deal of NIMBYism. You will have people coming out in droves saying that they don't want the needle exchange in their community, in their neighbourhood, that they don't want methadone clinics in their neighbourhoods, in their communities, because these people are drug addicts and they fear them. We need to understand that drug addiction can affect nearly anyone, and that once you're hooked, there's no way out except if there is a willing person and a willing body and a willing government there to help you, to stand up for you, to not be afraid of this NIMBYism and not to succumb to it, but to say that these are human beings who need help to get off drugs.

We need to make sure that this happens, that the government of Ontario is sensitive, and we need to be brave. As a Legislature, all of us, in all parties, need to be brave on this issue. We ought not to fight each other or condemn each other. We need to stand up for those people who desperately need our help.

In conclusion, I await the government signalling what they're going to do in terms of committee. There are many things that need to be talked about, and I for one am anxious to get on with this work. I am anxious to have this second reading. We still have some, I guess, 11 months or 10 months until the start of the next election campaign. Let's do something about this and make sure that this bill is a good one.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to respond to the member for Beaches—East York. I just wanted to talk a little bit about the number of different people that we've heard from in preparing this bill and then what the bill really does.

You mentioned the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, but in addition to that, the ministry had struck a narcotics advisory panel, which included the physicians and a number of the other health practitioner groups as well. So there was quite broad representation on that, which provided input into the strategy.

Obviously, the select committee talked about a whole host of issues but found this one to be an extremely urgent one. I would just like to note that the select committee, of which I was a member, in fact did visit First Nations. We visited a very remote Far North First Nation but also First Nations in both southwestern and southeastern Ontario, and we met with First Nations regional health authorities in both the northeast and the northwest of Ontario.

So in fact, in coming to its conclusion, there has been a lot of discussion, and we're still waiting for the final report from the minister's advisory group. So there has been a lot of conversation go on.

The reason this particular piece is in legislation—because we understand that there's all sorts of other work to be done. The reason this particular bill is before us, however, is, as the member from Durham has said, that pharmacists already have all sorts of records—and, in fact, the ministry has records—of all those prescriptions

that have been provided for the purpose of the Ontario drug benefit program. But the ministry has no legal authority to do anything with that information—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Beaches–East York continued the very collegial, co-operative, and respectful commentary today on this bill. Having worked with him for many years, I know he brings a lot of commitment and passion, I might say.

1720

But, really, if I look at the committee's work—not to just slip over his comments—the person that impresses me most on the whole topic of the health care and mental health debate is the member from Sudbury. I think she's phenomenal in terms of—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Nickel Belt.

Mr. John O'Toole: Nickel Belt. Pardon me. She really knows her stuff on the issues. I've sat on committees with her.

The whole issue here is that we are in agreement. The member from Beaches–East York has said that quite effectively, but you have to make sure that the ministry is prepared to deliver. This is potentially life-threatening. We've talked about that.

As I say, we're all looking forward to the next steps. I think that with the co-operation that I hear today, we can achieve that. All members would be encouraged to urge the government and Premier McGuinty to do the right thing, change the channel, move away from taxes, move away from that agenda of the revenue problem they've got in the province. It's not just about the HST. This is about something we can actually do something about, and in that vein, I'm not going to turn to some of the things that should be included or removed from the bill. I'm saying: Let's get on with it; let's have a day or two of hearings.

You'll find co-operation from our leader, Tim Hudak, on this, and Christine Elliott, as a matter of fact, the very effective health critic. This has been discussed in our caucus. We're ready to move forward. We need some leadership on that side, or we'll take our turn with the ring.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd also like to join the list of people commending the member from Beaches–East York, my colleague, who once again added a human element to it, his own experience that he faced in Mexico and how easy it would be for an individual to get hooked on these types of things.

But do you know what? On a positive note, it's good to see once in a while that everybody co-operates on something that's really going to benefit the people of Ontario, and I think this will. This is a start. As has been pointed out, there are 30 recommendations that haven't been dealt with yet. Everything takes time. I would have liked to have seen maybe a few more in this bill, but I'm

sure that with a combined effort it will go down that road.

What I am positive about in Ontario is the fact that we're moving towards naturopaths. We are moving and more to a combination of Eastern medical science and Western, and combining the two and getting direction from different aspects. A lot of the things that have been around for hundreds of years in the Amazon forest continue to bring forth natural remedies for some serious diseases that people will be working on for the next 100 years, I'm sure. There have been a lot of good things coming out of the Earth's natural resources that we should have been using a long time ago, and we probably were. They couldn't quite identify the chemical compounds of these things, but they knew they worked. Now we're getting to a position where the naturopaths are combining with traditional medicine, and traditional medicine is opening their eyes and ears to the ways of natural recovery.

I think that, as we move along into the next millennium, you're going to see less narcotic drugs and more drugs that come from natural species that are on our planet that we probably have not utilized for a long time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's a pleasure to rise to make a few comments on the remarks by our colleague from Beaches–East York. I listened intently to his remarks; we know he always listens very intently to ours. He clearly is an admirer of the College of Physicians and Surgeons' recent report, as am I, and a very useful report it is.

Certainly the College of Physicians and Surgeons has, over the years, made a great deal of effort to educate physicians in the appropriate use of opioids. In fact, most recently their MD Dialogue, which all physicians in Ontario receive, had an extensive summary of recommendations for physicians.

Physicians are very, very busy people, and I'm not sure how many of them had the time to read through the CPSO's very good educational attempt recently—this last month. So it's clear to me that this bill, Bill 101, is really an adjunct, and a very, very important adjunct, to the efforts of the CPSO.

It's certainly something that we recommended on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, a committee of which I was a member. We did, in our recommendation 11, make it a particularly urgent need for the ministry to move on, so I'm extremely pleased that the ministry did move rapidly. It is, in a way, a quick fix of a very urgent problem. It is a first step. The select committee's report was entitled *Navigating the Journey to Wellness*, and as we know, every journey starts with a first step. I was delighted to see this. It's an excellent first step. I have every confidence that our government will proceed in a timely fashion with all the other recommendations that we have.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Beaches–East York: You have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to thank the members from Guelph, Durham, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and Oak Ridges–Markham for their comments. I do have to say I'm slightly disappointed, because I didn't hear exactly from either of my two Liberal colleagues whether or not there are plans afoot.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: The subcommittee will decide at committee.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm being told now that the subcommittee will decide, and that is true in all aspects, for every bill, when it goes there. But we all know that the subcommittee has only limited jurisdiction. The recommendation is made, and then it goes to the full committee. I would hope that the subcommittee, then, will make the recommendation that this bill goes to extensive public hearings, because that's where I started, that's where I finished, and I think that is what is the important aspect: to get it right, to hear from those people who will be directly affected, who have the best advice to give to the people of Ontario—and particularly for our First Nations folk, who live, often, in isolated circumstance without proper medical care and who may find themselves addicted because there are no other pain management tools available to them.

I say to my honourable colleagues, I'm looking forward, in spite of the fact there was no assurance—and perhaps they felt they could not give that assurance. They were very kind in their words. To my colleague from Oak Ridges–Markham, she is absolutely correct that the College of Physicians and Surgeons has done a great job. We only hope that every doctor in the province finds the time to read this documentation.

We look forward to the vote. We look forward to the subcommittee and the committee doing the right thing for the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), there having been six and a half hours of debate on Bill 101, this debate is deemed adjourned unless the government House leader deems otherwise.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: We would like the debate to continue, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr. David Zimmer: Obviously, continuing this debate is an indication of the importance that this issue has to this chamber, and indeed to the people of Ontario. It's the desire of other members who want to speak to this very important issue.

I thought what I would do is just take a couple of minutes. I just want to review some statistics to set the groundwork for why this legislation is needed, why it is so important.

I have my own personal experience on some of these issues. Before I was elected to the Legislature, I practised law and I did a lot of personal injury work, both at the defence bar and at the plaintiffs' bar. I can't tell you the number of times over the years when there were severely injured clients in great pain, and the medical profession,

in a very noble way, was treating their pain, repairing their conditions, making them comfortable. They were often in great, great pain.

1730

One of the things that unfortunately happened from time to time, or even more frequently, was that from the very best motives, the prescriptions for some of these narcotics that we've heard about over the last few hours were prescribed for the patient, and the patient faced a dilemma. On the one hand, the pain was excruciating, to the point where you could not tolerate it; you literally could not live with that pain. The treatment was often a regime involving a number of the drugs that we've heard about over the last few hours. And the real tragedy was that in addition to the pain caused by this horrific accident or whatever the personal injury was—they often recovered from that injury; their limbs recovered, the broken and torn parts of their body recovered, but in the process of dealing with the pain during that time, they became addicted to these narcotics. And often the addiction was harder to combat, harder to deal with, harder to cure than the original injury.

In fact, just let me refer to some statistics. Between 1991 and 2009, prescriptions for narcotics containing oxycodone—Percocet, OxyContin—rose by 900%. That's 900% in eight years. There is something alarming about that statistic. Since 2004, the number of oxycodone-related deaths in Ontario has doubled. That's in a six-year period. Narcotics-abuse-related admissions to our publicly funded treatment and addiction centres have doubled from 2004 to 2008. That is an alarming statistic.

The Ministry of Health has spent \$156 million on narcotics for over 600,000 Ontario drug benefit recipients in 2009-10, and that covered about 3.9 million prescriptions. Now, when you do the math there, this equates to over six prescriptions per person, at an annual cost of \$260 per person.

What do the police tell us? Police report that narcotics containing oxycodone have become popularly trafficked drugs by individuals and organized crime, and charges and arrests in connection with these activities have skyrocketed. So there's the health care cost, there's the personal tragedy, and now there's the law enforcement cost.

Finally, the misuse and abuse of prescription narcotics, particularly those containing oxycodone, has reached such an alarming level in First Nations communities in Ontario that some First Nations communities have declared a local state of emergency as a result. These are communities that are struggling with a whole host of issues. They're struggling with employment issues, they're struggling with economic issues, they're struggling with other social issues, with family breakdown, and now, in the last few years, they find themselves struggling with this addiction issue.

The fact of the matter is that these drugs are over-prescribed, they're overused, and they are being obtained illegally. They are being sold on the street for profit while the people who are buying them are getting sick

and dying, and the people who are selling them are getting rich.

This situation cannot be allowed to continue. That's why we're taking strong action, and that's why there's such support, all-party support, in this chamber for this legislation. We want to save lives, we want to improve health outcomes for Ontarians, we want to stop abuse, we want to stop addiction, we want to stop the misuse of controlled narcotics and other substances, and we want to make sure, at the same time, that the patients who legitimately need this kind of drug regime, on the recommendation of their health professional, get the drugs that they need to treat the pain. But this regime has to be a proper prescription, a proper medical management of the prescription, a proper taking of the drugs so that these drugs—and let's not forget that many of these drugs really are miracle drugs in that they do manage pain, but the key is that they have to be properly, fairly and professionally managed. To assist, to provide a regime where proper and professional use of these drugs can be ensured, and misuse and the consequences of misuse can be stamped out, the Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act, 2010, is now before us.

Now, there's been a lot of technical talk this afternoon, some of it quite detailed. But let me just walk through some comments, because I want to say something about what this bill actually says, what it actually does and how it's actually going to work. I've read through the legislation several times, and I want to summarize it for the public who are watching this debate and for the public who will read Hansard tomorrow. I'm going to try as best I can to put it in layman's terms, because I think it's important that, aside from the technical information and the technical terminology in the bill, we understand the basics of it, we understand its core philosophy, we understand what it's going to mean for the citizens of Ontario, particularly those who have found themselves, for whatever reason, either trapped or involved or quite properly needing these drugs. How is it going to work for everybody?

This is what the act contemplates, and this is how it's going to work: The act seeks to improve the health and safety of Ontarians. That's uppermost in the bill's intent: improving the health and continued safety of Ontarians. How is it going to do that? Well, it's going to set up a regime so that we can monitor, analyze and report information, including some personal information, related to the prescribing and dispensing of the monitored drugs. So there's going to be a tracking regime, because we want to find out where the drugs are coming from, what they're being prescribed for, who is using them properly, who is misusing them, how they are finding their way into illegal circles and so on.

We're going to do three things. The legislation is going to contribute to and promote appropriate—I stress “appropriate”—prescribing and dispensing practices for these drugs so that we can support access for medically appropriate and proper treatment of pain. When you have something that's wrong with the system—and clearly

there's something wrong with this drug system relating to the drugs we've heard about—the first thing you have to do to tackle the problem is get some understanding of the problem, get some information about the problem—yes, get some facts. We have to gather the facts together and find out what is really going on, because there's a lot of rumour out there, there's a lot of misinformation and there's a lot of correct information, but it's all sort of mixed together. What we have to do is distill that into information that can be used in a meaningful way so that we can address this problem.

The next thing we want to do is identify and reduce the abuse, misuse and diversion of monitored drugs, because in many circumstances, it's the diversion and misuse of these drugs. There are proper prescriptions; there are improper prescriptions. There are legal sales; there are illegal sales. What we have to do is separate the legal from the illegal, the proper from the improper.

The third thing we want to do is reduce the risk of addiction and death from the abuse or misuse of the drugs we have heard about this afternoon. No matter how proper and how helpful the drugs are, any physician—anybody who has thought about the problem—knows there is always the risk of an addiction developing, and the addiction can develop without the patient even knowing it. They're taking the drugs, following a proper prescription regime; they're being responsible in how they use the drugs; they're treating their pain. But sometimes, through no fault of their own—it's almost unconscious—they slip over that line and become addicted.

What we want to do is help those people recover, help them to step back across the line.

1740

I've mentioned monitored drugs. That's what we've been talking about this afternoon. What is a monitored drug? What drugs are we talking about? How is it going to affect folks?

“A monitored drug is a controlled substance,” and the definition will be found in the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (Canada). So anybody who wants to know about what we're actually talking about, we go to that piece of legislation and there's a list of the drugs that we're talking about. There's a qualification on that: “unless the controlled substance has been excluded by the regulations under” this bill that we're debating this afternoon. The legislation contemplates that “additional drugs may be specified” or added to the prohibited list by regulations in the future.

“Subject to any conditions provided for in the regulations” of this bill, “the minister and the executive officer, who is also the executive officer under the Ontario Drug Benefit Act”—and there we see how we draw in that other piece of legislation—“may collect, directly or indirectly, and use personal information for the purpose of the act.”

“The minister and the executive officer may disclose personal information if the disclosure is” specifically “permitted by the act”—this act we're talking about—“the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

Act, or by the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004. Specifically, if the conditions set out under the act are met, the minister and the executive officer may disclose personal information"—so there's a very strict regime about who and what information can be disclosed. There are limitations on to whom that information may be disclosed. The information can be disclosed to prescribers, dispensers and operators of pharmacies because they're the people who have control over these drugs in the first instance. They have control of them and, from their control, the drugs go out into the community, either to patients legally or perhaps illegally or somewhere else, but those are the three entities that have got control of the drugs in the first instance. So the disclosure of the information will only be to these people.

"The minister must ensure that a notice regarding the minister's and the executive officer's collection, use and disclosure of personal information under the act is made available to prescribers, dispensers, operators of pharmacies and the public.

"The act requires prescribers to record" very "specified information on prescriptions for monitored drugs. Dispensers are required to keep a record of specified information with respect to prescriptions" for these drugs "and to ensure that any identity verification requirements set out in the regulations are met" before any drug is dispensed. "If directed by the minister or the executive officer, prescribers, dispensers and operators of pharmacies are required to disclose certain information, including personal information, to the minister or the executive officer for the purpose of the act."

The information is going to be disclosed for the very limited and legitimate purposes of dealing with the abuse of these drugs that we've been talking about this afternoon. The purpose of that is to eliminate this misuse of the drugs.

The act is also going to empower the minister to appoint inspectors. What are these inspectors going to do? Well, here's what the inspectors will do. They can conduct inspections. They can examine and make copies of relevant documents or other things. They can question persons about matters relevant to the inspection, and it is an offence to obstruct or interfere with an inspector conducting an inspection or to provide false or misleading information.

You can't have an obligation to disclose this information, which we need to monitor and eliminate the misuse of these drugs that we've been talking about this afternoon, without having proper oversight of the record-keeping. Probably—not probably but certainly, in my experience, I think that the keys to dealing with this problem will be two things: proper record-keeping of anybody involved in the prescribing and dispensing of these drugs so that we know who is giving what to who, and then a check on the record-keeping. That is, inspectors can go in and make sure that the proper records are being maintained. You see, that way we have an accurate picture of what's out there on the street.

The act will provide for legal immunity for the minister, the executive officer or other persons retained

by the crown, as well as for prescribers, dispensers and operators of pharmacies concerning any act that they've done in good faith. There are a series of checks and balances on how these people have to conduct themselves and the standards to which they must operate.

In closing, what I've tried to do is outline how this act is going to work, because, as I say, some people may or may not be alarmed about the oversight contemplated by this act. But I say in that regard that the harm that is done by the misuse, either inadvertent misuse or advertent misuse, is so great—and we've heard discussions and stories that various members have put on the record of practical and real situations that they know of, people who have become addicted to these drugs, the havoc that it wreaks on careers, the havoc that it wreaks on families, on children, on spouses, on partners. Addiction to some of these drugs is so powerful that it completely defeats the otherwise noble purposes in one's life.

So I say that anything that we can do to combat this abuse, this tragedy of the misuse of these drugs, is worthwhile.

The act contemplates certain inspection regimes and disclosure of records and disclosure of information, but that is a small, small price to pay for eliminating this abuse.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I only have two minutes on this. I would have liked to have had more, and some people might not have liked what I had to say, but I'll shorten it; they'll like it less.

You have to wonder how we got here: a 900% increase in the prescriptions of this drug between 1991 and 2009. Pain management: You bring out a drug that deals with pain management, and all of a sudden it becomes the panacea for everything that anybody is suffering from. Pain management used to take one form at one time or another in our society.

You see, we've come to conclude that no one should ever suffer discomfort. That's how these things started to get prescribed and re-prescribed and more prescribed and over prescribed. This is the kind of mess we've got now here in the province of Ontario—not only in the province of Ontario, but certainly here.

There have to be some kinds of measures taken, some kind of control over what is a tragedy, what has happened with narcotic prescriptions in this province.

1750

You have a drug that performs one good thing, and that is manage pain, but we've seen how many bad things have come as a result of these drugs, these opiates that have caused so much tragedy. The number of people who have died from overdoses in the time that these have been on the market is just absolutely scandalous. Something has to be done. This is a start, but it is only a start.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm glad the member from Willowdale is going to stick around. I was going to give him a compliment.

Mr. David Zimmer: Okay, I'm here.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: Back in your seat, please.

The member from Willowdale made some fine points in his submission on the overall picture of the drug situation in Ontario. Certainly, we all agree. Many people have touched on the same subjects here. It's not very often that that happens, but we all feel that something has to be done, and done soon.

The member brought forth some more points that I hadn't seen in the last two submissions that were interesting and certainly worth bringing to committee. I'm sure that the members of this House will send it to committee for review by the proper authorities and for more input from the different groups, which I'm sure would like to add to this. The physicians did a wonderful report, but I'm sure we would look to hear from the people whose lives it had a negative effect on, and how they've improved their lives with help and proper direction to alleviate this problem that's inflicted on our province through the bad use of narcotic drugs.

I'm sure that members from all sides of this House will work together to better the lives of the people of Ontario—mental health and health in general. Certainly, it affects their job; it affects their whole life. They'll be more productive if they can break these habits, get back into the workforce and get back into some normalcy. I think that everyone will benefit from the start of a—there is a lot more work to do, as the member pointed out, but it's a start, and I want to see it move ahead quickly and implemented as much as possible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I look forward to speaking for my 20 minutes on this very important bill, which I don't think I'll get after this round is done.

Interjection.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I have two minutes right now; exactly.

But I want to note one point. I think what's remarkable—I've been hearing this debate for a while—is the kind of collegiality that exists among members. Once you get through the cut and thrust of question period, you get some really concrete debate that takes place, with constructive ideas. This is one important issue where we all bring some sort of a personal story, either from our community or personally of somebody we know, or even individually. I've heard some stories in terms of interactions with these types of painkiller medications, these narcotics that can turn addictive and result in complex situations.

In my little time after this, I will speak at some length about what has been happening in Ottawa in terms of abuse of narcotics and why this legislation is important. It's a good, important step to ensure that we do control these drugs and that we have a system in place in order to monitor the use, the prescription and the abuse around these drugs so that we can remedy any abuse that may be

caused—especially the illegal element, the criminality around the use of this drug as well.

Once again, I congratulate all the members who have spoken on this for sharing their ideas, because that's how the process, in terms of developing a bill, strengthens and really ensures that whatever we pass through this legislation and implement in the province has very constructive input from all the members—the task that we've been given by our constituents.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm so pleased to be adding my voice for the third time this afternoon to this bill, Bill 101, the narcotics act. Of course, I have mentioned several times in this chamber this afternoon that our party, the Progressive Conservative Party, will be supporting this bill. But as I've mentioned on a few occasions, we on this side of the House feel it's necessary to undertake a series of consultations throughout the province, particularly in northern Ontario, as well as in aboriginal communities. We think this is a first step, an important first step, but that there's more work to be done so that Ontarians with these abuse issues surrounding narcotics can be dealt with fairly, quickly and effectively.

I'd just look to again reiterate my support for my colleagues on the non-partisan, all-party Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. I think that the members who sat on that committee and the work that they did ought to be commended in this chamber for putting aside party differences to look at what is best for everyday Ontarians who require this Legislature's assistance, and that's why I'm pleased to see this bill move forward. I think it speaks to some of the issues that our colleagues from all political parties dealt with.

So again, thank you for this opportunity. I think it might be unprecedented for a member to speak three times in an afternoon on one bill. Mike Brown is actually shaking his head. But let me be clear: I've enjoyed my opportunities today to speak to this bill and I am a great supporter of it. I look forward to speaking to it again at another opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Willowdale, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. David Zimmer: It's heartening that all members of this Legislature are on the same page on this issue.

The issue of stakeholder consultation has come up, and in the two minutes allotted to me, just let me tell you that the various health care regulatory colleges, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario and so on, have been consulted with. Various law enforcement agencies throughout Ontario have been consulted with. The Ontario College of Pharmacists has been consulted with. The OMA, Ontario Medical Association, and the ODA, Ontario Dental Association, have been consulted with. Representatives from the various arms of the pharmaceutical industry here in Ontario have been consulted with on the various aspects of this legislation.

I can tell you that in the general public there's been a strong, if not overwhelming, response to this legislation. There are a lot of points of view and very good suggestions there. We've particularly heard from various patient support groups that deal with pain management issues.

The various First Nations communities have been consulted with. In fact, in my remarks I said how they have gone so far as to declare a state of emergency and looked to this Legislature for some assistance here.

Other third party payers, the workers' safety board and the like, have been consulted with.

Equally as importantly, the Information and Privacy Commissioner has been consulted with because there are some disclosure issues involved in this legislation, and I touched on those in my earlier 20-minute remarks.

Thank you, Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): After referring to the various timepieces that are available to the Chair in this chamber, I refer to my trusty pocket watch, which says this House is adjourned until 9 of the clock Thursday morning, September 30.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 30 September 2010

Jeudi 30 septembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 30 September 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 30 septembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY TAX CREDIT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR LES ACTIVITÉS DES ENFANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 29, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit / Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour les activités des enfants.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to join the debate on this children's activity tax credit bill, Bill 99. We're going to support this bill. I want to preface my remarks by saying that. We're going to support the bill because our caucus, Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, believes in tax relief for Ontario citizens, Ontario citizens who have been whacked with the triple whammy of taxation by the McGuinty Liberals this year with the implementation of the HST, just for starters.

You have to ask yourself: Why did we get to the point where we're bringing in a children's activity tax credit? Well, it's here, because, you see, they realize now how badly they messed up; how badly they messed up with the implementation of this HST and how much it is hurting families. In fact, my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka informed me that the other day at estimates the Minister of Finance, under questioning, made a statement, and I'll paraphrase. He said, "We knew everything was going to go up after the HST. We knew everything was going to go up with the implementation of the HST." They weren't saying that when they brought the HST in. They were talking about how wonderful it was going to be for Ontario.

You know, families in Ontario, their children engage in activities—and I'm going to use hockey as the example, our national sport, hockey. With all due respect to my friend from Peterborough—and congratulations to

the Peterborough Lakers, who won their 13th Canadian senior lacrosse championship this year; congratulations to the Lakers—but hockey is our national sport, with all apologies to those who claim lacrosse still to be. Most Canadians accept that hockey is our national game and the one that we're the best at. I think it behooves us to do everything we can to ensure that more and more of our children are engaged in that great sport.

Earlier this year, when the HST was implemented, they weren't calling me so much about it. But when it came time to register their kids for minor hockey this fall, whoa, something hit the fan and it didn't smell good. I tell you, I started to get the calls. I started to get the calls from hockey parents. They say, "What are these people trying to do to us?" Do you realize what it has done to minor hockey fees in this province? You see, one of the most costly parts of being engaged in hockey is the cost of ice time. That's all subject to the HST now. And of course there are so many other things. If you are a hockey mom or a hockey dad, you are driving your kids all across hell's half acre most of the time to get them to games and practices. What are you paying HST on? You're paying HST on the gasoline to run that vehicle.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Our gas prices are lower.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, they'd be 8% lower, I say to the member for Essex, if it wasn't for your HST, so don't play that game; it's 8% higher as a result of the HST. So there's 8% additional taxes on gasoline as a result of that measure. That's not an arguable point, so you might as well put that one aside. If you want to defend the HST, you might want to go back to your riding and start talking to your people about it. See how they like it. Was it 83% thought it was a bad idea in a recent Toronto Star article? We can have that debate, but we're not going to have it right now.

People are being harmed immeasurably by this taxation measure brought in by the McGuinty government. They're calling me and they're saying, "What is going on here?" It doesn't matter whether you're a Liberal MPP or a Conservative MPP or a New Democratic—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, it does, really. Really, it does. We think it matters a great deal.

Mr. John Yakabuski: My friend from Welland thinks it does matter. He will understand my thoughts on this shortly. It doesn't matter when you talk to your constituents about whether or not they think the HST was a good thing for them. It's almost universal that they think it was a bad thing. That's what has driven up the cost of those activities. I'm only singling in on hockey, but hockey is

certainly one of the most expensive activities that we have for our kids.

0910

When they start to look at those bills and look at the new charges, the new rates that the minor hockey association in their area is now expecting them to pay, they are saying, "Whoa. Wait a minute." That news somehow got through all the spin doctors and the deflectors and the minions in the Premier's office, and he said, "Oh, oh, people are upset, are they? Well, we're taking all their money. Maybe we'll give them a little bit back." That's kind of like, "We'll take your money and we'll give some back." You know what it's like? But you know, they're not giving it back right away; oh, no. You're going to pay your minor hockey fees in September, perhaps October, and you're going to get maybe up to \$50 back maybe in June, when you get your tax refund back, in the form of a tax credit.

You know what it's like? The Premier says, "Let's give them a little bit of their own money back and maybe they'll get excited about it next June." Next June we're only a few months away from the election—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Simcoe North, I'd ask you to withdraw that comment, please.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Member for Renfrew.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They're going to get some of this money back next year, and without referencing what my friend from Simcoe North had to withdraw, I'll just put that in another way. It's sort of like the thief comes and robs you, okay? And now, next June, he sends you back 10% of what he robbed from you, but he's also expecting that he's going to receive a thank-you card in the mail for being so kind as to give you back 10% of the money that he stole from you in the first place. That's kind of the thought process that the folks in the Premier's office went through: "Oh, people are going to be joyful, overjoyed with glee, when they get this McGuinty tax credit back in June. They're going to be so thankful." My goodness gracious, it just doesn't cut it.

You know the other thing that they said to me? They said, "How can they be doing this to activities?" The Minister of Health Promotion and the Minister of Health and the Premier, they go on ad infinitum about how we have to attack the scourge of childhood obesity in this province. We have to do something to get our children more involved in physical activity. Part of it is diet and part of it is lifestyle, and part of that lifestyle is physical activity, so we need to do everything we can to encourage our children to be involved in physical activity. But some of those physical activities, such as hockey, which is not only a great physical activity but a wonderful character builder for our children—it's wonderful to have them involved in a team sport, relating with other children of their own age and also relating with adults. Hockey is like a fraternity. The families—it's like a club:

Your team, your people, the children, the parents, they become great friends over the course of that season. Like a fraternity, they spend an awful lot of time together. They spend a lot of time going from one place to another, filling the McGuinty Liberals' coffers with HST as they fill their tanks with gas. It's a great character builder and a wonderful thing for children to be involved in.

But what does the government do? It turns around and decides, "Oh, we're going to put HST on those activities." Good Lord, where's the logic? "Let's tax them a little more to put them just a little farther out of reach of our struggling families here in the province of Ontario"—struggling to pay their hydro bills. Eight per cent added to the hydro bills, which went up 75% already under this government.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Up 75% under this government, and now what does the Premier do but say, "Let's whack them with—there must be something left in those pockets. We can't be down to lint and bare threads yet. There's got to be something we can get our hands on. Put your hands into the taxpayers' pockets, put your hands into those families' pockets one more time, because I believe there's something left, so let's get some money off the activities part of it. Let's tax physical activity. Let's tax the very thing that children don't get enough of today to keep them healthy, to improve the health of our society today and thereby improve it dramatically in the future by having us all more healthy and more physically fit. Let's get some more money out of the people's pockets."

Now, as an act of contrition—but it may be too late; you see, the taxpayers of Ontario are not quite as forgiving as the good Lord. This act of contrition—\$50 coming back in the form of a tax credit next year—is a little too little, a little too late. People will not be running to the rooftops and to the highest hill singing the praises of Premier McGuinty for this \$50 tax credit. You're only giving back to them what you stole from them in the first place. That's what's happening.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Here's what happens when you know you've screwed it up. All of a sudden, you start bringing out these little things. You know, when Premier McGuinty talked about the HST and he exempted newspapers and meals under \$4, he said, "That's it. There are no more breaks for the HST. We've got it right." How many times does this guy have to change his mind? How many times does this guy have to flip-flop on something or backtrack on something?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Whatever it takes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Whatever it takes. I say to my friend from Trinity-Spadina that he's right. There is no limit. In fact, they've established a new bar, and it's called the no-limit bar. You are able to reverse yourself and flip-flop as many times as you like in this province under the leadership of Premier McGuinty. That is the standard now. The bar has been set.

So you've got this children's activity tax credit, the northern hydro tax credit and now—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order, order. I'd just ask members to calm down. It's only Thursday morning, for goodness' sake.

The honourable member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has the floor.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You know, Mr. Speaker, it's very difficult in this chamber sometimes, and as you know yourself, the last thing I like to do is raise my voice. I like to speak in a very low and measured tone. But the folks across the aisle make it very difficult. I can't hear myself sometimes.

So now we've got this, and just the other day—here's the corker for you, Speaker—because they know they're not doing very well at those seniors' seminars, when you have meetings with seniors to find out what's on their minds and what's troubling them—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Yes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Probably my friend from Peterborough may have had one. He's saying yes. Do you know what they told them? "You guys are not doing very well, and you're not treating us very well."

Is the Premier going to admit that he has messed it up with the hydro file in Ontario? Is the Premier going to admit that they don't have an energy plan that works? In fact, they don't even have an energy plan. They're going to start working on one, though. It's coming. It's going to come soon, but probably not until after the next election, because we really don't want people to be able to look at it and evaluate it.

0920

At those seniors' seminars, they're getting it. They're getting it in boxcar letters. So members like my friend from Peterborough went to the Premier and said, "You've got to do something." He said, "Well, you know me. We've got to find a way out of this. We don't want to flip-flop completely again, because people are calling us the contortionists of the 21st century. So what can we do? How can we back out of this without doing a complete flip-flop?" And they said, "Well, let's buy off the seniors. We're working on the parents with kids in hockey. Let's see if we can't buy off the seniors a little bit on their hydro bills. That should work."

So we'll shortly be debating, beginning next Monday, the latest bribery attempt on the part of the McGuinty government—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw that terminology, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw, Speaker. It just came out. Sometimes you don't even have to think about it; it just comes out.

Anyway, as I said, we are going to support this bill. It is not that we're against—we're in favour, as I have said so many times. No one who holds political office at any level in the province of Ontario is more committed to tax

relief and fairness for families in this province than our leader, Tim Hudak. So we are going to support this bill because we're not in a position at this time to bring in tax relief legislation on our own. You see, we're not the government. So in spite of our tremendous disappointment in what this government has done and the record of this government, we are forced: We are going to support this bill.

Any relief for families in this province is something we will support, because God knows it's been a tough run under the McGuinty Liberals. It's been a tough run for families under the McGuinty Liberals. So we're going to be backing this bill. We look forward to its implementation. We know it comes into effect the minute it receives royal assent, so it will be in effect for the next taxation year. It will be a minor, minor bright spot in an otherwise woeful experience for the Ontario taxpayer when they have to pay their taxes and examine their return next year.

We accept this. We accept it on behalf of struggling parents as a little bit of a crumb from the master's table as he decides what to do with the rest of the largesse. I wonder: Is there a way we could limit all the McGuinty consultants to just a \$50 tax credit instead of the millions and millions they have been getting under nefarious and questionable consulting contracts in this province, while the poor families who have kids in minor hockey struggle every minute of every day just to raise their children?

The record of this government is clear. The people of Ontario are not being fooled. You folks over there think you've got them. Well, I tell you, you don't. They're going to take your 50 bucks, because they will view it as a small measure of what you have taken from them. Shame on you for what you have done to families in this province with the implementation of that HST. As I said, my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka—at estimates this week, your own finance minister, and I paraphrase because I don't know the exact quote, said, "Yes, yes, we knew that everything was going up in the province of Ontario with implementation of the HST." What a stark admission by the finance minister.

Prices are going up, but I'll tell you what's going down. I tell you folks that you might want to get home to your ridings. You might want to sit down with those families. You might want to find out what's going on, because what is going down is the approval rating of the McGuinty Liberals.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's interesting to look at this bill. Just as an example of how phony this bill is, to get the \$50 you have to spend \$500 on some sports or arts event, and when you spend that \$500 you're going to pay 13% HST on it. That 13% is going to generate \$65 for the government. After you've paid the government that tax of \$65, they're going to give you back 50 bucks. The government is still going to make 15 bucks on you. That's how phony this whole bill is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I think we've heard quite enough Tory rhetoric. Let's hear from some real people. This is the response in the Guelph Mercury when a reporter went around and interviewed people—not my press releases. This is from Mary Ann Randall of the Royal City Power Skating program.

"Randall said the tax credit comes at a good time for families involved in ice-related activities, since ice rates have gone up both as a result of city rental increases and from the ... HST. She said the tax credit will not only make up for the increases, but will actually make her program somewhat cheaper for participants.

"It was really good news for me, because I did have to put my rates up, which I hate to do," she said. "But now it actually works out cheaper."

He goes on to say that many are applauding the tax credit locally.

This is from Cara Collins, director of the Guelph School of Art, at Wyndham Art Supplies. She says, "I think it's a great incentive for parents, especially families on limited income, to make some of that extracurricular programming work for them."

"The school offers Saturday art classes for children and day camps during the summer months, as well as private lessons.

"Studies in the arts, she added, are often seen as a luxury, while sports tend to take priority for many families. The arts boost self-confidence and enable a child to express themselves creatively, she said. An aptitude in the arts is linked to improved performance in math and sciences, she added."

Linda Beaupre, artistic director of the Guelph Youth Singers, said: "There are so many parents who are committed to the whole child, putting their children in extra activities—arts and sports.... It would be a fabulous thing if they could get not only the credit, but that vote of confidence from the government."

That's what real people on the street are saying about this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I just want to commend the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his comments. They certainly were very thoughtful and thought-provoking.

During the summer—and I think, you know, you can look across and see that this government is on a bit of a scramble. I was pleased to have the member for Nepean–Carleton come to my riding in August. We toured our community, and we met some wonderful people from the Bread of Life Dance Theatre, BOLDT. Sam Crosby-Bouwhuis and Jamie Irwin were the co-owners. We met with a number of parents, and they were incensed that this government is so out of touch. That small dance studio was carrying \$1,500 a month extra rather than passing it along to the parents who are at that studio; \$1,500 a month they carried because of this greedy HST.

It was obvious to me, and it was obvious to the member for Nepean–Carleton when she was in my riding, when we were at that dance studio, that this latest misstep just proved that Dalton McGuinty and this government have two left feet.

I'll tell you, on October 6, 2011, we know that the people of Ontario are going to be looking for a new dance partner because of this government's insensitivity to families. It was pretty amazing for us to see that that day. I was so glad that the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke talked about the need for this credit but also the missteps that this government has made so far this summer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just want to say that I'm very supportive of many of the arguments the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has made, and I will join him in those arguments in just two minutes. I will be attacking the Liberal government from a different perspective, but it's along the same vein. I just wanted to tell you that you're on the right track.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes for his response.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's great; I'm going to be out of here before 9:30. I have a meeting at 9:30, so I won't even be late. What is late is your contrition, on the part of this government. That's late; that's too late.

I appreciate the comments from the member from Guelph, the member for Leeds–Grenville and my friend from Trinity–Spadina, who is always so close to work with me on so many subjects.

Interjection: He makes a great dance partner.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I find him too short to be a good dance partner, but that's just the two of us; we're not compatible that way.

The member for Guelph wanted to talk about some of the third party endorsements of the bill from her constituents in Guelph. Well, she just doesn't get it. They're not going to refuse the tax credit, I say to the member. The folks aren't going to send it back. Any little bit that can be coming their way to help is going to be put to good use.

She talks about how one parent thought that it would basically help defray the additional costs of the activity. That person has to drive their kids, most likely, to those activities. It doesn't make up for the cost of the extra tax on the gasoline that they're going to take to get there and the other HST that is going to be paid as a result of participating in those activities.

So I say to the member for Guelph, if she wants to get out there and campaign on this bill, good luck. Have fun with that. Let me know how it works out. Because the people of the province of Ontario are not being fooled by anything this government does at this point. You have taken the people for granted for too long. A little bit, a few crumbs off the table at the 11th hour because you

recognize what a mess you've made of it, I don't think is going to make up for the damage you've done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I was looking for an opportunity to speak to this bill, because this bill is an admission by the government that they're in trouble. When they introduce these little measures, it means that they are doing the polling and the polling is telling them, "You're in trouble." "What do we do?" They don't know what to do. So they come up with these little measures to try to appease people. The fact of the matter is, people are hurting. They're finding that life is becoming more and more unaffordable, that they have lost good-paying and, yes, in most cases, unionized jobs that gave them a middle-class lifestyle. They are losing a middle-class lifestyle because they are losing middle-class, well-paying jobs. In the last four or five years, we've lost about 380,000 jobs—good-paying jobs.

What we are seeing is some employment, but it's temporary. You have a whole lot of people who are being employed part-time. You have a whole lot of people working in the service sector, where 60% to 70% of Ontarians are working now, and they're making, what, \$8, \$9, \$10, \$11, \$12, \$13, \$14 an hour, living on the fringe, living on the poverty line. And they're working; the majority of people are working and living dangerously on the poverty line. That doesn't mean these people are doing well. So when they come to this country aspiring to be and belong in the middle class, and they find themselves not there, they have to ask themselves, "What's happening? Where are we going?"

When the government introduces a measure such as the HST and calls it, "We are modernizing our tax system," what does it mean? What does that word "modernizing" mean? How modern is it to be whacking a whole lot of people equally badly? How modern is that? We are cutting corporate taxes because that's modernizing our economies. Wonderful, Liberals; you're doing such a great job, giving away billions of dollars that working men and women want corporations to contribute because that's their share of being part of a human society. The government is saying, "No, they don't have to contribute anymore. We're cutting down their contribution."

When we cut down the corporate contribution, who do we turn to? Ordinary Ontarians who have to put their hands in their pockets, get some money out and dole it out to the corporations, because they're doing so badly these days that they need the people living on the fringe to dig in their pockets and help them out. That's modernizing our economy—asking ordinary working men and women to make a greater contribution than ever before because the poor corporations and banks are doing badly and they need the poor working stiff to help them out. That's the so-called modernization of our economy, the Liberal way. I don't get it.

The Premier stands up and says, "We're cutting income taxes so that the well-to-do, those who earn over \$100,000 and more, pay less and less in income taxes"—

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: That's so not true.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And you, good lawyer, are going to have a chance to speak in a second.

So 93% of the well-paying folks get a tax break. And the member from Ottawa Centre chuckles with good humour thinking that somehow he has got a better answer than I do on this.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I do.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm waiting for you. I'm waiting for your two-minuter.

Ninety-three percent get an income tax cut. Who subsidizes the majority of people who have good incomes? I consider myself as a person who has got a good income. I shouldn't be getting a tax break. Mr. Naqvi from Ottawa Centre shouldn't be getting a tax break. He doesn't need it. He is a former lawyer. I'm sure he's okay, and he's now well paid as an MPP. He shouldn't get a tax break, but he is; I am. That's called modernizing our tax system.

Then we've got a \$20-billion deficit to boot. The government laughs at it and says, "Yeah, I know. We're giving you a tax break, but we've got a \$20-billion deficit. We've got to do something about this deficit so we're giving you a tax break." Maybe the member from Ottawa Centre is going to chuckle at that, too. Maybe he's going to say, "We're going to give more income taxes as a way of dealing with our deficit so that we can increase it and make everybody happy." I don't know where your chuckles come from when you make those funny arguments, but that's not modernizing our system.

Then they introduced the harmonized sales tax. That's modernizing: "We're going to whack everybody equally across the land. Whether you're making \$30,000 or \$200,000, we're going to whack you with an 8% provincial tax, because we believe that's the way to modernize our economy. If you're earning \$200,000 and he's earning \$30,000, you get whacked equally. But don't worry, we've got some breaks for those of you who make under \$30,000. But if you make \$50,000, you get whacked just as badly as the person making \$500,000." How is that modernizing a system? What kind of Liberals are you? What kind of Liberals have you become? Where is that fine Trudeau in your midst? He no longer exists in your midst. Where is he? Where have the Trudeaus gone? Member from Barrie, you would know him. Where has he gone? Where are the Trudeau-likes in your Liberal ranks? Where are they? They no longer exist.

As you modernize this tax system that whacks more and more people to death, there you come, giving people a children's activity tax credit worth \$50. You hurt them day in and day out, and under the pressure you come up with a little plan to relieve the pain, a \$50 opiate, which is the next bill we're going to be discussing around narcotics. You give them a \$50 opiate, hoping to relieve the pain, except this pain is permanent and there's no plan to manage this chronic pain that people are going to feel for the rest of their lives—no plan. The \$50 you're giving them to relieve the pain is not going to manage it because, you see, it's going to hurt for a long, long time, and \$50 doesn't do it.

0940

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Think about percentages.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I say to you, think about this. Think about this, member from London—Fanshawe: In the school system, these fine Liberals, absent-Trudeau types, are now charging parents an extra tax for a whole lot of different activities that they're a part of. Students are paying higher user fees than ever before in their high schools to buy essential things that the Minister of Education should be paying for. Some \$600 million is raised by parents, yes, through user fees, but mostly through the fundraising that parents do in their schools. And why do they do fundraising? Because the government is not giving enough money to provide for essentials, and when parents find themselves without the essentials that they need, what do they do? They fundraise. And the government, the Premier and the Minister of Education say, "That's okay. Raise money until you drop. We don't care. We think it's good, because as long as you're raising money, I don't have to tax anymore and get whacked as a result of taxing you. But if you're raising it out of your own pocket and you feel good, God bless." So the Premier and the Minister of Education say, "That's okay. Keep raising money as much as you can." In some fields north of here, just about a 10- or 15-minute walk from here, some schools raise money to be able to have AstroTurf—\$400,000 worth of AstroTurf.

You know what? Some of these people set up charities so that they can funnel that money through a charity. We, the government, give them some money back, the feds give them some money back, and they feel good in contributing. The government says, "That's okay." Parents feel that's okay, because they're getting something good for themselves and their children. That's how we raise the extra money: through this indirect tax on parents, and they do it because if they don't do it, they feel their kids are not getting what they need. Some parents do it because if they don't do it, they'll feel criticized by those who are doing it, so they all feel engaged in having to raise money: indirectly taxed because the government of Ontario says, "We don't have any more money to give. We have a provincial deficit of \$20 billion. We have no more money to give. You're on your own. Yes, we used to help you, but we can't anymore, so if you want to raise the \$600 million or more, you can." And under that weight of the \$600 million that parents are raising, the government says, "We've got a \$50 opiate to make you feel good in case you're hurting."

It doesn't solve the problem. Understand this, Liberals without Trudeau, Liberals-in-the-absence-of-Trudeau types: for this \$50, as one Conservative member, the member from Halton, said but a few moments ago, you've got to spend \$500. A whole lot of people don't spend \$500 on some type of sports plan or music plan or whatever other plan. Some people can't afford to spend \$500. So the Liberals without the Trudeau conscience are going to give \$50 to well-to-do parents who are already sending their kids to music lessons or some sports classes because they've got the bucks, and they're going to get a

\$50 tax credit, whereas the people who can't afford to send their kids to those programs get zilch, zéro, zero, nada, niente, zip. So this is a good little opiate for the upper middle classes who spend money to have their kids become geniuses in music, great sports people, maybe in swimming or who knows what. But the majority of people will get zéro, zero, nada, nihil, niente.

So what does the government do? They feel they've done something great, so they say to the Tories and New Democrats, "Are you going to oppose this bill?"

How do you oppose a little measure? If it gives some people a break, how do you oppose it? If they've been whacked over the head with this HST in perpetuity, where even funeral services get taxed in perpetuity, and then you give them a \$50 break, am I going to say no to that? No.

You have made the lives of people unaffordable, and it's systemic. What you are doing is systemic, systemically bad. Dangling a little piñata of \$50 at this little party is not going to make the pain go away, because the pain is chronic. Unless you manage that pain, unless you have a plan to manage that pain, by not inflicting a whole lot of pain on the majority of Ontarians, you're not going to solve it.

So is this New Democrat going to oppose this? No. It's okay; it's better than nothing. I would prefer, if we want kids to be actively engaged and actively involved, that you put physical education teachers in our school system.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: We did, we did. Remember?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no. My good friend Lou Rinaldi from Northumberland—Quinte West says, "We did, we did." Only 35% of the schools in Ontario—you ought to know that, because I've said it before, and it's a fact—only 34% or 35% of the schools have physical education teachers. So when you say, "We did," I don't know what "We did" you did. I don't know what "We did" means, because you did absolutely nothing. If you want kids to be—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Grade 1 kids have never had physical teachers.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Member from Guelph, we used to have physical education teachers.

You used to be a trustee, as I was, and I was a teacher long before you were—possibly; I don't know. But you were a teacher at the post-secondary level, and you ought to know that we used to have physical education teachers, and we don't have them anymore.

If you want kids to be physically active, they need someone to teach them how to become active, when kids are sitting behind computers or their laptops for hours and hours, and then they get very little physical activity in the school except the supposed 20 minutes' physical time where the teachers are supposed to do something with them. We don't know what they're doing. But you can feel good that you have a policy that says, "Oh, we told them to do 20 minutes of jumping up and down." Come on. What are those kids going to do in a classroom full of desks—they're going to jump up and down for 20

minutes? No. I don't believe it's happening, quite frankly. I don't believe it's happening.

They need physical education teachers, member from Barrie, physical ed, so they'll learn how to actually be physical, understand why it's important, why we need to do it, but it has to be done.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Liberal friends, do not despair. Some of you will be re-elected. Don't despair.

But I remember in 1990, when a number of new members said, "Oh, no, I'm going to get elected, no problemo," and they didn't get elected, by the way. Don't despair. Some of you will get re-elected, and you can do all the "Blah, blah, blah"—as you should—and feel good about what you are doing. But many of you will not get re-elected. But do you know what? You have to defend what you're doing, because you've got no other choice. You have to defend yourselves as best you can. You have no choice.

But do you know what? I'm sad that I don't see too many Trudeau Liberals any more in your ranks; there are none. That is a depressing day. Just like the Bill Davis types; I don't see too many of those either, except some of my friends like Ted from Halton. Quite right. But we've lost some of the Red Tories, and we've lost the Trudeau types.

0950

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: And Bob Rae went to the Liberals.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And Bob Rae went to the Liberals, I admit. God bless; that happened. But most of us are well-rooted in an understanding of how we bring about greater justice and fairness to the majority of Ontarians. But when you lose the Trudeaus within the Liberal ranks, you've got nothing left. It's an empty, hollow shell. That makes me feel sad, I've got to admit. It saddens me, right? Because I used to like some of the Trudeau types. I did; I've got to admit it. They're not there anymore. But we've got the member from Ottawa Centre, an up-and-comer.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, following in Trudeau's steps. He's going to speak right after me, just to support my arguments. Yes, siree.

I don't know what to say. Again, it's little measure. It's a little opiate—50 bucks' worth; not much more. The government is in trouble and they know it. Rather than supplying the systemic answers that are needed, in trouble and under tremendous siege, they give a few bucks, hoping that the public will notice. The member from Guelph doesn't realize, when she reads that letter, that a couple of people are going to like it but the majority of people don't even realize. But what they know is that the pain is chronic. What they know is that the people feel the pain, and it's chronic. That, they feel. But this \$50 opiate: Some people are going to get it; the majority are not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Trinity-Spadina speaking for almost 20 minutes. I listened to his argument. Normally, I like to listen to him. Sometimes he takes a logical approach and makes a logical debate, but this morning I listened to him sending to us and to the people of Ontario conflicting messaging.

The first message is against the 93% of Ontarians who are going to get an individual tax cut. He's against it. And now he's complaining about the children's activity tax credit because it does not benefit all the people of Ontario.

It's important to support families who want to send their kids to do some kind of activity, whether a sport activity or an art activity. It's very important. We're matching the federal government's tax credit, and we went further, even to art activities. We're taking a very important step toward supporting families to be able to afford sending their kids to sport and art activities. If the member doesn't like it, it's very simple. The vote is going to come very soon. He can stop in his place and say, "I don't like it. I'm going to vote against it."

It's very important, when we have issues across the province of Ontario, to address them through different management, different initiatives, like coming forward with an initiative to support families who are sending their kids to do some kind of sport activity, to do some kind of art activity.

We listened to many different arguments from the opposition party and the third party. They criticize us a lot, but I'm not sure what their plans are. I think they have no plan for the people of Ontario, so that's why they're only standing up in their places complaining, attacking left and right, without any vision for the future, without any constructive plan for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Certainly the member from Trinity-Spadina made some good points. I've just listened to the member from the London area. I would say to you, if there is a government that has no vision, if there's a party that has no vision, it is certainly this McGuinty government, this Liberal government. We have seen, since they came to power in 2003, a succession of taxes which have hit taxpayers in this province hard. Families are hurting. It began with the health tax when they were first elected. Despite the fact that the Premier said, "I won't raise your taxes," he did introduce a health tax, the largest income tax increase in the history of this province, and many people today don't even know it's there.

Now we have the HST. We also are seeing just incredible hikes in the energy prices, and people have seen hikes in their insurance. People are being hard hit by this government. It's one knock after the other.

This HST, which covers almost everything in the province of Ontario—they're trying, I guess, to tell the public, "We understand and we're going to give you a tax credit on children's activities," whether it be sports or culture or art. But they don't seem to realize that this HST is widespread and it's on many, many products that

people are buying and many, many services. We've heard that it's on gas. You go to any gas pump now and you just take a look at the impact of the HST as a percentage of the gas purchase.

So for this government to now be trying to bribe parents with their own money is totally inappropriate and isn't a vision—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment, please.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I would do so. Thank you. Withdrawn.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to speak after my colleague from Trinity-Spadina. Frankly, I think the point he made was a good point, and that's that many, many people in this province will never see a penny of this money. If they are relatively well off—and well off is getting tough to be—they may be able to recover some.

Frankly, we think that it's a good idea to give people some of their money back. As you're well aware, the HST is set in place to give a very large-scale corporate tax cut. That's the simple reality of what's going on.

But I want to speak to the reality that people face, that in order to get \$50 back, they're going to have to put out \$500. People around this chamber can speak to the reality of people's lives in their ridings and the number of people who have difficulty putting \$100 or \$200 or \$300 up front for something even now.

There was a survey that came out recently saying that 60% of Canadians would be in trouble if they missed just one paycheque. People don't have a lot of spare cash. Large expenditures are ones that they normally finance through debt. Putting up \$300, \$400, \$500—putting up \$1,000—is going to be very tough.

I think that the member from Trinity-Spadina is right: that many, many Ontarians will not in the end be able to take advantage of this particular credit or reimbursement, that people will in fact see from the HST a reduction in their spending power, their standard of living, all to finance a corporate tax cut that does not need to be given—in fact, a corporate tax cut that is going to undermine the standard of living of people in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me pleasure this morning to add a few comments for my good friend from across the aisle, who I always enjoy listening to. Sometimes, though, I question some of his dialogue.

If you want to listen to the negative and putting down of Ontarians, you just need to listen to the folks from the opposite side, because it seems to give the impression that this phenomenon of hardship is only happening in Ontario. Well, wake up and look outside the window. The phenomenon we're experiencing in Ontario—times are challenging, but it's right across the world.

When we talk about energy costs, I think everybody would agree. I mean, if you're an immigrant like I am—

even 50 years ago we were paying more for gasoline and hydro in Italy than we're paying now here. I'm not justifying that that's good or bad or in between, but the reality is, that's the reality. We need to look out the window and smell the roses sometimes.

When we do these things like credits to help Ontarians, I think it's very well appreciated. They keep on saying that it's not enough. They keep on talking about the HST. They don't talk about the other tax reforms that benefit Ontarians. They take that right out of the question.

I wonder if the members opposite, when they file their 2010 income tax return, will give back to this province that credit that they're going to get from the provincial portion, because, obviously, to them it means nothing. Or give it to somebody, like the one time they promised they were going to give their raise to somebody, which I don't think they did.

And it's fine to chastise us—we'll take the criticism—but I think you need to talk about reality. And the reality is that we enjoy some of the best education in Ontario, some of the best health care in Ontario, and some of the best living standards anywhere in the world.

1000

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Trinity-Spadina has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I thank those who commented on my remarks.

I want to say that when you have a \$20-billion deficit, you don't just give money away to various sectors. You don't just give it away. This Liberal government, which doesn't have a Trudeau anymore, gives \$2 billion away every year to the corporations—two point something, actually. Why would you do that?

The member from Northumberland-Quinte West says, "Well, it's the way of the world. It's the way it is. It's getting harder and harder for everybody." But if it's getting harder and harder, and you've got a big deficit of \$20 billion, why do you give \$2.2 billion, I think it is, away to the corporations every year? And there are no strings attached, by the way. You just give it away, and you're saying to the corporations, "Don't worry; we'll pay for it. We'll pay for it through our deficits. Don't worry, the middle class and the working poor"—because they are working but they're poor. "We'll take care of it. We'll put it on our shoulders. We'll subsidize them."

This is all under the illusion that somehow giving this money away is going to create more and more jobs. We've been giving cuts to corporations for the last 15 or 20 years and we've got more and more unemployment every year. But we keep giving it away because the middle class will pay for them. I don't get that argument. I just don't get it. But that's what the Liberals argue, and it makes no sense to me.

I know they're in trouble. They need to give a \$50 opiate, but I can tell you that it's not going to work. Speaker, it's not going to work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Seeing none, Ms. Smith has moved second reading of Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will vote on this matter at deferred votes after question period today.

Second reading vote deferred.

NARCOTICS SAFETY
AND AWARENESS ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ
ET LA SENSIBILISATION
EN MATIÈRE DE STUPÉFIANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 29, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances / Projet de loi 101, Loi prévoyant la surveillance des activités liées à la prescription et à la préparation de certaines substances désignées.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I do appreciate the opportunity. I guess I've got 10 minutes to speak to the government's approach to the prescribing and dispensing of prescription drugs. The focus is primarily on the narcotic analgesics, products like OxyContin.

This is Bill 101; I refer to it as narcotics 101. There is a tremendous amount of information available on this subject. It's a subject that, in my view—having spent 20 years with the Addiction Research Foundation, I should let you know that I feel very strongly that there has to be more work done on the information and the education side of this.

In this House, with a majority government, it's relatively easy to pass a law, but this issue is much more complex than that. It involves treatment and it involves education, particularly in our school system, given that the increased consumption, as I understand it, of products like OxyContin is primarily impacting young people.

As you would know, Speaker, I spent a number of years with the Addiction Research Foundation, now known as the Canadian Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. I spent eight years working just a few blocks from here, at 33 Russell Street, the headquarters for that organization at College and Spadina. My great-aunt always referred to Spadina as Spadeena; that was a different era. Things change over the years, and approaches to addiction.

OxyContin is an addictive substance. All narcotic analgesics—all opiates are addictive. That's the bottom

line. These products have been addictive for the 5,000 years of recorded history of people using these substances. There were drug addicts 5,000 years ago. They were addicted to the opium-type drugs, the same kinds of drugs that this legislation today is dealing with. As far as the dispensing and prescribing, we have a very sophisticated system now, through doctors and pharmacists, to get this product out to people, legally and illegally. That's something that's not new as well.

I joined the Addiction Research Foundation in 1974. At that time, one of the primary problems was the misuse of prescription drugs, primarily, at that time, Valium. We referred to it as Prince Valium. It's also known as "mother's little helper." I don't know how successful we were then, but there has been certainly—probably more through education rather than legislation, much of that problem has been somewhat wrestled to the ground.

I'd like to make reference to a report from the College of Physicians and Surgeons. It's titled *Avoiding Abuse, Achieving a Balance*. It's a good report. It provides a bit of a snapshot of this troubling trend. It's not just in Toronto; it's across the province. I'll quote one line from the report: "Ontario is in the midst of a public health crisis stemming from the inappropriate prescribing, dispensing and illicit use of opioids."

The language changes over the years. I traditionally use the term "opiates." I've been away from this field for about 15 years, but the fact remains that doctors in our province obviously rely on such medication to help their patients deal with pain, to manage pain; and if properly used, it makes sense. However, we know there's abuse, we know there is misuse and obviously, addiction.

Going back to that report from the college, they indicate that "prescription opioids are more likely to be found on the street than heroin and"—as I said earlier—"have now become a drug of choice" among young people.

There has been a fair bit of talk in this debate about OxyContin. Oxies, or oxy—I don't know what else it's called on the street; OC, for example. It's different from percs; it's different from Percocet. If I had time, I could probably explain some of those differences. But very simply, OxyContin is a pain medication and it's a time-released medication. It was developed in 1995 for people who needed around-the-clock pain relief so that they wouldn't have to constantly be going for another pill.

OxyContin contains oxycodone. This is an opiate drug. It's addictive. It's something you find in morphine. There were tremendous problems with morphine use after the Civil War. It's derived in a way somewhat similar to, obviously, heroin and methadone; they're all derived from opium. So oxycodone is in OxyContin and it's the same opiate that's in Percocet or Endocet, for example.

As far as opiates in general, as I said, they are analgesics, narcotic analgesics. They act as central nervous system depressants. These things can kill you, especially in combination with alcohol or other central nervous system depressants—Valium, for example. Very simply, your breathing slows down, your heart rate slows down—a lack of oxygen—and you pass away.

These opiates can be produced naturally from the opium poppy. I've seen the fields of opium in Turkey, for example. How long has that plant been around? We know people have been using that plant, as I said, for over 5,000 years. Secondly, these opiates can be derived synthetically. Again, the development of morphine, back in the Civil War era—highly addictive; the development of codeine—addictive; and heroin—obviously addictive.

These substances are used not only for pain but are also used recreationally, and obviously used by people who have no choice. They've developed a dependence. They've developed a tolerance. They need more and more of the product, and they've developed an addiction.

Just going back, out of interest, to the opium poppy—my interest, anyway, in this particular plant. There's evidence that it was first cultivated in ancient Mesopotamia. This would be the lower Tigris and Euphrates River valleys, in what is now present-day Iraq. This is the birthplace of agriculture, and the cultivation of opium, along with other products, probably had a lot to do with that.

There is evidence—I don't know who digs up all of this historical data, but in 3400 BC, the Mesopotamians passed on the knowledge of opium to the Assyrians, and the Assyrians passed this on to the Babylonians, probably during time of war, when you had thousands and thousands of young people. Then as now, there was that opportunity to access product like this, somewhat similar to the transfer of narcotic substances—I think of heroin, for example, during the Vietnam War. You think of the opium that's prevalent now in Afghanistan, for example. The Babylonians passed it on to the Egyptians, and the opium trade flourished, with traders like the Phoenicians and Minoans, and then on to Greece, Carthage and Europe. Alexander the Great took opium back to Persia and India.

Fast forward to 1838 and the Opium War—China, 1838—when China ordered all foreign traders to surrender opium. The British won that war in 1841. Importing opium became legal in 1856 after the second Opium War. And I could go on and on.

I think one point I'm making is that this kind of stuff should be talked about in schools. It should be talked about in the curriculum, regardless of the subject, not just in health class. There's a lot more we can do than to just pass a law on this subject.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being almost 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to introduce Nancy Steele, who is here with us from my riding. She's the grandmother of page Audrey Steele from Sault Ste. Marie.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Joining us today is Robin Smythe, the mother of Henry Dennis, one of our pages here. His dad works in my office as my communications director, and that is Greg Dennis.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I would like to introduce Daniel Oleksiuk, who's in the west gallery. He's here from Vancouver and he's interning at the Ontario Securities Commission. Daniel is the son of Keith, who was a long-time friend of mine. He's the guest of Margo Duncan, who is the EA to MPP Paul Miller. Welcome.

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'd like to introduce two constituents from my riding. They are both on the board of directors of the Eastern Ontario Health Unit: Todd Lalonde and Marcel Leduc. Todd is also a trustee with the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario. Welcome.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to introduce Kristen Rouse. She is visiting us from Denver, Colorado, and this is her first time at question period. Welcome.

Hon. John Milloy: I want to welcome two members of my staff who are here from the riding today: Shelly Freisen and Jessica Voin, and also Emily Schacht, who is a co-op student in Wilfrid Laurier University's master program and is doing a term in my office. They are joining us here today in the gallery.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I would like to invite all members of the House to a flag-raising ceremony today at noon to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Cypriot Independence Day, followed by a reception in room 228. I hope everybody will join us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the member from Vaughan and page Noor Bakir to welcome her mother, Lina Bakir, to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, on September 22, Premier McGuinty told this assembly that there is a long-term energy plan on the books, it's 20 years long, and it requires that "every three years we revise the plan." But, Minister, the Ontario PC caucus has uncovered the Ontario Power Authority's licence renewal application, and it shows that the OPA wants all references to its three-year requirement removed from its mandate altogether. In short, the OPA wants to weasel out of their responsibility.

Minister, were you aware of the OPA's plan to weasel out of their mandate for a long-term energy plan?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm delighted to respond to that question because it gives me a great opportunity to talk to the Leader of the Opposition, members of this House and Ontarians about the very important work that's going on

in this province as we build on the long-term plan that's in place now and we move forward.

I'm looking forward to announcing to Ontarians in December our long-term 20-year plan for energy in the province of Ontario. This plan will ensure that we have a strong, reliable and clean system of energy, not only until the end of the term, not only for the next two or three years, but we're talking 20 years down the road.

Unlike the party opposite, we care about future generations. We're not going to leave future generations with the incredible mess that they left us seven years ago. We're building a strong, reliable and clean energy system, something that every Ontarian can be proud of.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, yesterday the minister was caught with his pants down, not even knowing about the Ontario Energy Board's study of future power prices. Today, it seems like the minister has no clue that his own Ontario Power Authority is trying to weasel out of its mandate to bring forward a long-term energy plan as part of their licence renewal, and judging by the last answer you gave, you have no clue what is happening with your agencies in your ministry.

Meanwhile, while there is no plan for long-term power supply, while the OPA is trying to weasel out of their responsibility, the McGuinty government has gone head-long down a path of expensive energy experiments: your billion-dollar subsidies to Korea-based Samsung, billions spent on defective smart meters, and you've backtracked twice on your microFIT scheme.

Minister, if you don't know these answers, who the heck is running the show over there?

Hon. Brad Duguid: What's important to Ontarians is the fact that Ontario today has a strong, reliable and clean energy system that's the result of good planning done by the McGuinty government over the seven years that we've been in office. It didn't happen by accident. When you look back to the mess that the member opposite left for us—he was sitting in cabinet during that very time when they refused to make the important investments in transmission and distribution, leaving a crumbling system behind, when they refused to build the supply that they needed to build. Supply went down 6% when they were in office; it didn't go up. It went down 6% when they were in office, while demand went up 8%.

Over the last seven years, our plan has brought in 8,000 new megawatts of power, a 20% increase in our system. For the first time in a long time—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Yesterday we asked the Premier and the minister 10 times to release the Ontario Energy Board secret report on prices. You either refused to do so or had no clue this was happening.

Now, Minister, I'm asking you for the third time if you had any clue whatsoever that your very own Ontario Power Authority, in its licence renewal application, is trying to weasel out of its responsibility to bring forward a long-term plan for energy.

Yesterday, the minister contradicted his own Premier when he said there isn't a plan; there won't be one until the end of December. The Premier said one is pending. Your own agency is saying they want out of this responsibility. Do we believe the Premier? Do we believe the Minister of Energy? Do we believe somebody else?

Minister, do you have any clue whatsoever what is happening in the Ministry of Energy?

Hon. Brad Duguid: What a bunch of made-up nonsense. Let me make it very simple for the Leader of the Opposition, because he seems to have trouble understanding this, and I can understand why. He knows nothing about long-term planning because he sat in a cabinet that never did any. He sat in a cabinet that didn't plan years in advance, that simply kept their fingers crossed and hoped that every morning when they got up and turned the switch on, the power would be there.

I am very much looking forward to moving forward by the end of this year, likely in the month of December, with a long-term energy plan that Ontarians can be proud of, a long-term energy plan that builds on the long-term energy plan we have in place now, that's going to continue to ensure we have enough power for Ontarians to count on to run their homes and businesses, and that's going to continue to ensure we're making the investments we need to have a reliable system of energy. Unlike the party opposite—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1040

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the minister: You know, Minister, this is very serious. A lot hangs on your Ontario Power Authority working on a long-term energy plan. It's hard to understand exactly what you say and what the Premier says, because they're so often different, but if I understand it, now you're saying that you'll have that plan by December. What I'm saying to you today is that your own Ontario Power Authority, in its licence renewal application, says they want off the hook. They don't want to have to do this every three years, as the minister says they're responsible for. Either you have no clue this is happening, you don't care, or somebody else is running the show. But it's very serious, Minister, because it's obvious that the Ontario Power Authority does not want to work on their core plan. For the 11th time, will you release the OEB report on energy prices? And for the fourth time, do you even know what the OPA—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Hon. Brad Duguid: After question period yesterday, I went back to my office to find this report that the Leader of the Opposition suggested—he spoke as though it was sitting on our very desks here in the Legislature. We've received no such report. The Ontario Energy Board is in the process, as they should be at this time of year, of doing a number of forecasts and getting ready to put forward in mid-October the regulated price plan that comes

forward every six months, that will include with it a price forecast that will be public; it will be announced. That's something that we've been doing since 2006. Unlike the party opposite, we've made our energy system transparent. Unlike the party opposite, these forecasts—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, transparent? Give me a break. We've had to ask you now 12 times to release the OEB secret report on how much higher prices are going. We're asking you now for the fifth time, did you have any clue that the Ontario Power Authority was trying to weasel out of the requirement to do the long-term plan? You have not answered that question; now it's the fifth opportunity.

Minister, here is the bottom line: Ontario families are treading water just to make ends meet. They're afraid to open Dalton McGuinty's hydro bills because the rate—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member of previous reminders.

Mr. Tim Hudak: They're afraid to open Premier McGuinty's energy bills because the rates are going up. I guess you must be an optimist, because the OPA has missed deadlines time and time again and now they are trying to weasel out of the core requirement. For the 12th time, please release that secret report and tell us exactly what the OPA is up to.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, yesterday, taking the lead from the member opposite, I went back to my office to see what this big report was that he was referring to. We don't have such a report.

What is going on is the Ontario Energy Board is working very hard right now doing forecasting work. They're doing that so they can make public their forecast in three weeks. That's something we brought in in 2006. That's called transparency. That stands in stark contrast to what you did to our energy partners. That stands in direct contrast to what they did to our energy partners when that member sat in cabinet. They changed the freedom-of-information act to exclude agencies like OLG and Hydro One, so they could hide the retirement fund that they were setting—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, with all due respect, the Ontario Energy Board reports to you. You are the minister in charge. If you couldn't find the report in a desk in your office, then you should have marched down to the OEB, slammed your fist on the desk and said, "Give me that report. Make it public." That's what a PC minister would have done. We would have made that report public. We're tired of you trying to cover up exactly how much prices are going up in the province of Ontario.

Minister, you have not answered now for the sixth time: Why in the world does your Ontario Power Authority, in the application for their licence renewal, try to wiggle off the hook of producing that long-term energy plan?

Minister, families are struggling today to pay Premier McGuinty's hydro bills. Enough is enough. Why won't you come clean?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister of Research and Innovation, order.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Brad, sit down. What's the matter with you?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You're welcome, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I read an interesting article last night from former Speaker Warner. He talked about the role of the Speaker. He used an interesting sports analogy, and that was that when we go to a hockey game, the person we do not want to see interfering in the game is the referee. I think when you come to question period, the person you do not want to see interfering in the flow of question period is the Speaker. So I would ask all members to be cognizant of that.

Minister of Energy?

Hon. Brad Duguid: What a bunch of nonsense. The Ontario Energy Board is hard at work today, as they're getting ready to prepare the forecast that will be made public in two or three weeks. I'm not quite sure what the member opposite is trying to get released from there. What I can tell you is this: They're working hard; they're doing forecasts. In about two or three weeks, about mid-October, they'll be releasing publicly a forecast of pricing going forward for the next year, as they do every six months and as they've done since 2006.

That's the way to professionally work—unlike the previous government, which never allowed any of that information to go out. Indeed, under the previous government, they excluded organizations like Hydro One from freedom of information. They were trying to hide the traces of the efforts in the retirement fund they were setting up at Hydro One for their cronies—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Back in the spring, this government released ads in which the Premier bragged that, "Ontario is coming out of this global recession sooner and stronger than anyone expected." My question is, does the government still stand by that assessment?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What we have done is lay out a plan to create jobs. When we provided the money to ensure that auto workers in Oshawa, St. Catharines, Windsor and across southwestern Ontario would continue to have jobs, that member and her party voted against it.

We understand the volatility in the economy. I would refer the member to my budget. I would refer her to our updated quarterly reports. I would refer her to all of our public statements that have cautioned that the rate of

growth in the economy is still not what we would like it to be, that there is more work to do.

I can tell you that this party, this Premier, Premier McGuinty, and his government have laid out a plan to get us back to balance, but, most importantly, to get people back to work where we can and when we can.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would refer the finance minister, the Acting Premier, to today's Statistics Canada report, which states very clearly that Canada's economy contracted in July. And the Conference Board of Canada's new report says that Ontarians have the lowest consumer confidence in the whole country. But anyone, actually, who's been listening to Ontarians could have told you that.

Why does the McGuinty government continue to claim that its plan is working when mounting evidence makes it very clear that it's not working at all?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: If the member opposite took the time to read the full report, she would know—and I think Ontarians understand—that the challenges in the global economy are indeed affecting Ontario. There are far too many people unemployed. We are deeply concerned about the state of the United States' economy and its impact on our exports. We have to continue to be vigilant.

Here's what we are trying to do to help Ontarians through that. We created Second Career, a retraining program for laid-off auto workers and others. What did that member and her party do? They voted against it. When the auto industry was on its knees, when my community was faced with layoffs and when Hamilton, her community, was faced with layoffs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East will please come to order.

Final supplementary.

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontarians actually have the lowest consumer confidence rate in the whole country. That's the point. People are feeling squeezed by the McGuinty government's hurting sales tax.

Kim Whitney writes this: "The HST has hit us very hard.... My husband's salary does not go up enough to keep up with the cost of everything."

Statistics Canada and the Conference Board put into numbers what Ontarians like Mrs. Whitney are feeling. If the HST was supposed to kick-start the economy, why is it, instead, kicking people when they're down?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The other day, the member opposite said that she's going to leave the HST in place. She said, "Take it off of energy." I ask her again: Is she advocating eliminating the HST?

Let me provide her with a quote from TD Economics that says, referring to our tax policy, "This shift ... will further be supported by recent policy initiatives to cut the cost of investment," such as the HST and corporate capital tax cuts. "Business investment—and particularly in machinery and equipment—is likely to be a leading

growth area over the remainder of 2010 and into 2011-12." In fact, it's that very policy which will create more jobs.

She may want to raise taxes. She may not want to invest in education or health care or a better electricity system. We're making the decisions to build a stronger economy for our kids and to help the people—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Regardless of the Acting Premier's misstatement of my comments, I have another question. My second one is to the same Acting Premier.

The McGuinty Liberals claimed that the HST was just a bitter pill that would bring economic growth and 600,000 jobs. Instead, we have a contracting economy, higher costs and the lowest consumer confidence in the entire country. Families are worried about jobs still, and they are struggling.

Small businesses are struggling as well. Small businesses want to know why the government that promised so much has instead delivered so little.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They also want to know why, when we cut the small business tax rate by 20%, she voted against it. Why did you vote against the small businesses like DiMarco's in Hamilton? Why did you vote against those businesses on King Street and Main Street in Hamilton—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Stop shouting, Dwight. Stop shouting.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew and the member from Hamilton East, one of the reasons that the honourable member has had to elevate his voice is because of voices from the other side.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: When we eliminated the capital tax on small businesses on Main Street and King Street in Hamilton, why did she vote against it? When we lowered and evened out the business education tax for small businesses in Ontario, that member and her party voted against it. They have no plan, except to raise taxes, cut investments in energy and create more unemployment.

Our plan is about creating jobs, creating opportunities and doing the right thing for a stronger and brighter future for our children—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Small family-owned businesses are especially feeling the squeeze these days. Take Hasan Nahli, owner of Sammy's convenience store in Welland. Hydro alone is now costing his small business \$650 a month. The costs are so unbearable that Mr. Nahli

is about to throw in the towel. He can't afford to stay in business anymore in Ontario, and he's not the only one.

Does this government have a plan to help small business owners like Mr. Nahli, or is this government still pretending that everything is A-okay?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have lowered their taxes. We have lowered their income tax. We have eliminated their capital tax—

Interjection: We have uploaded.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have uploaded, my colleague reminds me. We have uploaded services to the municipalities, which has helped those small businesses cope with property taxes.

There is no doubt that small businesses are challenged, just as our unemployed people are challenged by the situation in the global economy. There is no doubt—

Laughter.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: And the NDP laughs. We think it's a very serious matter. We have laid out a plan with clear objectives, with a clear path to help small business. Every one of those initiatives, that member and her party voted against. They have no idea what to do to help our businesses, and that's why we are going to continue to build a stronger economy for those businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The totality of this government's actions has completely failed. Small business owners need relief. They're sick and tired of being told that everything is okay—yet they see their expenses climbing, their businesses are at risk and their customers are being driven away.

John Cryderman, a small business owner in Chatham, writes this: "Building an economy is all about placing more money into the hands of more people, not taking it away." This government can put money into the people's hands and help our economy today by taking the HST off hydro. Will they do it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We put \$10 billion into the hands of Ontario consumers and small businesses, and that member and her party voted against it. They have voted against every initiative that will help small business.

We acknowledge the enormous challenge that small businesses are facing across this province. I think they know and I think Ontarians understand that glib answers, glib questions from a member who has voted against every initiative aren't going to fix things.

We are in the centre of a global storm that continues on. We have taken steps that we believe will help these businesses, help families through these difficult and challenging times as long as they last, and I think Ontarians understand that. I think they want a government that's straightforward about what they're doing and is doing things to help build a stronger—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy. It's no wonder that Canada's worst government is also Canada's least popular. The McGuinty Liberals know how much Ontario families will pay for their hydro bills but are sitting on the OEB report. Yesterday, the Minister of Energy told the media that the OPA plan would be presented in December; today, he says it's now "likely" in December. We have to wonder which it is. Your OPA is so busy writing job postings for hospitality coordinators that they're too busy to write the long-term energy plan. In fact, they want out.

For the 14th time, will you stop promising a plan that may never materialize and release the OEB's bill analysis report today?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I responded to those questions initially in questions from his leader, and I made it very, very clear. The Ontario Energy Board of course is engaged in doing forecasting and analysis, as they're getting ready to release the report of price forecasting that will be released in a matter of weeks.

I couldn't have been more clear. We are looking very, very forward to bringing forward our long-term energy plan, a plan that's going to ensure we have a strong, reliable and clean energy system into the future.

But for the 100th time, I've got to ask that member, where is your plan? You had no plan when you were in office. Your plan is to go back to coal. Your plan is to reduce our investments in transmission. Your plan is not to build the level of supply we're going to need to supply Ontario families—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The McGuinty Liberals should start giving straight answers so Ontario families don't think they're making up energy policy on the fly.

Instead of the long-term energy plan, here are a few things that your Ontario Power Authority has been up to writing: a \$3-million propaganda campaign; job postings for a hospitality coordinator to order and coordinate catering for small and large meetings; and turning what was once called a virtual and transitional agency into a permanent and bloated bureaucracy.

For the 15th time, will you release the OEB report that you have in hand so that the OPA doesn't have to take time away from its other pressing concerns?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm not sure how I can be clearer to the member opposite about this report, because I've said many times now, we don't have their report. I think the member opposite needs to recognize that there's forecasting going on within the OEB right now because, unlike them, we are planning ahead. Unlike them, we do provide forecasts. Unlike them, we provide them to the public, and we make them transparent so that those involved in the energy sector and Ontarians know where our energy system is going.

1100

But I'm not surprised that the member would want to be dumping all over the OPA, because he doesn't support

any of the things they do. He doesn't support the conservation efforts they've brought forward to save 1,700 megawatts of energy. He doesn't support the efforts they've made to create 50,000 jobs across this province, jobs that your leader wants to kill—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PEST CONTROL

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Acting Premier. My question is: Why won't the McGuinty government act on or allocate funds to the bedbug crisis in our province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to start by congratulating the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for holding the summit yesterday. It was an opportunity for people to come together who all have the shared goal of preventing and remediating bedbug infestation.

The results of the summit are something that we are working very, very closely on. We are looking at how we can work collaboratively. There are many ministries that are involved in finding a way forward on this, and we also are working with our community partners, our public health units—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Back to the Acting Premier: At the bedbug summit, tenants were mostly shut out. Where was ACORN, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now? Where was ACTO, the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, both of whom called for landlord licensing? They need immediate assistance, and they need a plan from this government. So I ask again: Why won't the McGuinty government act on or allocate funds to the bedbug crisis in our province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the member opposite would be better informed had she actually stayed at the summit yesterday. My understanding is that she dropped in. There was a lot of very good information that was shared at the summit yesterday. We are working very closely with our partners to find a solution. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and I have contacted our public health units. They are working on the ground to find solutions.

This is a very important issue for people who are affected. No one should have to worry about going to bed at night for fear of being bitten by bedbugs. We are focused on this issue, and we are working to find solutions.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, I'm excited that this government's vision, under the Green Energy Act, combines the cleaner energy we need and want with the massive economic opportunity for our province to become a hub in the

expanding global clean energy market. This is exactly what my constituents in Ottawa Centre asked for in the last election, and they believe strongly that clean energy is an integral part of Ontario's future. This is why I'm proud of having a major company like Samsung committing to help achieve that vision in Ontario.

But I think Ontarians have been confused by the debates surrounding Samsung in Ontario. On Tuesday, the NDP leader, during an interview with 680 CFTR in Ottawa said, "Instead of growing and nurturing our own home-grown companies, the government gave \$7 billion to Samsung."

Minister, I am under the impression that this was the other way around. Could you clarify for the members exactly what the Samsung deal is and is not?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Absolutely. I want to thank the member for the question and thank him for the stalwart support of the Green Energy Act in his region.

There's a lot to talk about when it comes to the Green Energy Act, but one of the things that's very important is the jobs and investment that come to Ontario through that. To clarify for the member and any other members who have been involved in different views of this, our agreement with Samsung represents a \$7-billion investment by Samsung in the province of Ontario over six years. It represents the creation of 16,000 green energy jobs over that period. It represents four green manufacturing plants. Those 16,000 jobs would not be coming to Ontario, they'd be going to Ohio, if it were not for the leadership of this Premier and this government.

Ontario is open for business, and the Green Energy Act is helping us rebuild this economy and create jobs for people in every—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: We know that this government's commitment to modernizing and improving our energy system from the dirty and neglected one we inherited has required large and necessary investments. The people of Ontario recognized that the system needed to be fixed and that we needed action now—no more sweeping it under the rug and no more passing the buck.

Minister, you and the Premier have been clear that these critical investments in new generation infrastructure, renewables and conservation will affect the price of electricity in Ontario. But Ontarians are right to be vigilant about the cost of energy as we make this pivotal transition and to what extent that transition will affect their family budgets. They're entitled to the facts in this debate.

Minister, why are we seeing energy costs rise, and are Ontarians getting value for the investments being made in the electricity system we all share?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This indeed is a question on the minds of Ontarians. It's very, very important that we understand that rising energy costs are challenging for Ontario families and businesses. At the same time, Ontario has had to make those investments to ensure that we're moving away from the previous system, which was

full of blackouts, brownouts and dirty coal, to a cleaner system of energy, but just as importantly, a more reliable and stronger system of energy.

We're committed to meeting that higher standard, a standard of strength and reliability, a more modern system, a cleaner system of energy. For example, our \$6-billion investment in enhanced transmission and distribution is a testament to that commitment to ensure that we're providing the reliable energy that Ontario families count on day in and day out. The other side doesn't have that commitment—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Acting Premier. Your lottery scandals have more sequels than the Harry Potter series. The plot of the first OLG scandal involved insider wins, firing the CEO and a promise by the Premier to do better. The plot of the second OLG scandal involved expense abuses, firing the CEO and a promise to do better. The plot of this latest OLG scandal borrows heavily from OLG one, but the early reviews are that the \$12.5-million insider fraud makes it the biggest blockbuster yesterday. Will the movie end with the CEO getting fired and another promise to do better?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, it is difficult for me to comment on a criminal matter that is before the courts, but I will remind the member that this occurred when his party was in power. I will also remind the member—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. The member from Peterborough; the member from Renfrew.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nepean will withdraw the comment.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Ombudsman also addressed this case in his very good report that was presented to this House and that we acted on. I believe we have taken appropriate steps. I have great confidence in Paul Godfrey, who is now the chair of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.

Unfortunately, these things happen. They happen—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: How can we have any faith when you don't even know that this happened under your watch and you won't acknowledge that it happened under your watch?

The McGuinty Liberals are expanding into Poker Lotto and online gaming, but the news of a \$12.5-million fraud shows they aren't able to manage dealing with live people.

The OLG investigated the ticket for an insider win and handed out the \$12.5 million before the OPP stepped in.

The OLG has been without a CEO since you fired Kelly McDougald.

Deputy Premier, how will you restore the integrity of the OLG so people can have confidence that they won't be cheated?

1110

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have recently appointed an entirely new board and given it a very clear mandate.

I do want to remind the party opposite about what André Marin said on September 14, 2009, with respect to the steps we took on this particular issue. He said, "We are rejoicing that the province has taken this position."

Unfortunately, these situations are challenging. This was a particularly bad episode at OLG. We will continue to work with Mr. Godfrey and the new board as we move to find a new CEO and as we move to give Ontarians still greater confidence in that corporation and the future of the revenues that come from that corporation.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier/finance minister. The minister opposed alternatives to winding up Nortel pensions, claiming other models have failed and would put pension money into more risky investments. Nortel pensioners pleaded for a financial sponsorship model, but the minister refused to listen to them and their experts. He has even refused to consider his own pension expert Dr. Arthurs' recommended Ontario pension agency to grow up, not wind up, Nortel pensions.

Has anything changed the minister's mind about winding up the Nortel pension?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have undertaken again, as a result of meetings with some of the affected individuals, to have another look at this.

First of all, let me acknowledge the very difficult circumstances those people find themselves in. Their first request to this government was to take \$250 million and put it into the PBGF—taxpayers' money—to protect the first \$1,000 of their pension. We did that. It was the right thing and the appropriate thing to do.

In good faith, they've come forward with a proposal which, from the points of view of the various experts we have consulted—and we have consulted a number of them—has some very real challenges. In my view, the answer is not to continue to take the balance of what's left, which can't fund the entire liability, and invest it in riskier assets. There are challenges with that, but we'll continue—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Last week in Ottawa, the Premier reversed the minister's position, saying he would take a fresh look at the Nortel pensioners' proposal. Today, it's September 30. Nortel pensioners will either be put on the

pension recovery road, as the Premier alluded to, or they will be forced down the annuity path to pension windup.

Have the minister and the Premier seen the light and directed the Financial Services Commission of Ontario to hold off any windup of the Nortel pensions?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member's party opposite likes to read from people. Let me read a couple of quotes.

"I am not one of the pensioners who is asking you to hold off on the windup and transfer our guaranteed pensions into some plan which has already failed in the UK. I would choose, and many more would, to leave it in the government's guaranteed fund." That reflects the views of one individual.

Here is a letter from another individual: "I have not been given access to the details of the FSM plan [that] the NRPC are proposing. How many pensioners will be alive to enjoy the upswing in the market, if it comes back? Now, if the OPBGF is not applicable to the FSM model, the economy and market will have to take an overnight leap to make up for the losses."

There are risks associated with the proposal. We have undertaken to look at it again, and we are in the process of doing that. It is the appropriate and proper step to take.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. Minister, seniors have made and continue to make outstanding contributions to our communities. At home in Guelph, seniors have organized the regional seniors' games. The Guelph Wellington Seniors Association is the lead organization in one of our aging-at-home programs, called Make Yourself at Home, where they provide peer support and advocacy for seniors who live at home and help them navigate the system.

Here in Ontario, we are blessed with an active, healthy seniors population. We have the most diverse seniors population in Canada, with nearly a third of Ontario seniors having a mother tongue other than English or French.

Tomorrow is October 1, the International Day of Older Persons. Can you outline, Minister, some of the ways in which our government is supporting Ontario seniors?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Thank you to my honourable colleague for that very important question.

Let me say how excited I am to be the Minister Responsible for Seniors. In the short time that I've been in this portfolio, I've had the opportunity to meet some of Ontario's dynamic and active seniors, and I look forward to working with all of our partners to ensure that our government is responding to the needs of Ontario's seniors population.

The member is right: Tomorrow is the International Day of Older Persons. In addition to celebrating this very important day, our government celebrates June each year as Seniors' Month. Earlier this year, we passed the Retirement Homes Act, providing for the first time protection for seniors in retirement homes, and earlier this

week, I joined the Premier to announce our proposed energy and property tax credit for seniors.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Minister, we know that here in Ontario, like many other jurisdictions, our seniors population is growing rapidly. Over the next decade, Ontario will go through a significant demographic shift in its population. We know that next year, the first baby boomer will turn 65. I won't be all that far behind. We know that by 2017, there will be more people over 65 than children under 15.

Minister, Ontario and our seniors need to be ready to take on the new challenges that will arise as Ontario changes. Can you tell us more about steps taken to alleviate pressures that Ontario seniors face, now and on into the future?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Thanks again to the member for this important question. Our government has taken many steps to ensure Ontario seniors continue to have the support that they need to lead active and healthy lives. Under our proposed property and energy tax credit, which was announced this week, 740,000 seniors who own or rent their homes could get a maximum credit of \$1,025 annually to help them with their energy and property taxes.

This year, we doubled the maximum Ontario senior homeowners property tax credit to \$500. Ontario seniors are also eligible for our new permanent sales tax credit, which provides payment of up to \$260 for each adult and child and is in addition to the existing GST credit. Our government is working hard to ensure Ontario seniors—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, just this morning I've learned that the future of Wellington House, a long-term-care home in the town of Prescott, has been put in jeopardy. Minister, I'm told the reason your ministry staff won't allow the sale of this facility to go through, to protect the residents, is outstanding fees owed to the ministry by a previous owner. Can you explain to the residents, their families and the community of Prescott why the desire of your ministry to collect an outstanding debt is being considered more important than the care of senior citizens?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, thank you, through you, to the member for the question. I suspect the member opposite knows that I will need to go back to get the background on this issue. I am not familiar with this situation.

What I can tell you, though, is that when it comes to long-term care, this government is focused on the quality of care for patients. We are making remarkable strides when it comes to looking after seniors who are residents in long-term-care homes. I want to take this opportunity to commend the work of the member from Nipissing. She

did groundbreaking work when it comes to improving care for long-term-care patients. We are starting to see the results of that. I'm proud of the work we're doing in long-term care and I look forward to finding an answer for the member opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Minister, let's face it: It appears the ministry staff are putting unreasonable conditions on the sale of this property to the approved buyer. The buyer has stated his intention not only to continue operating Wellington House as a seniors' care residence, but a desire to put additional money into enhancing the facilities there.

My question to you is: Will you review the stance of your ministry staff to ensure that the sale goes through and this vital care home can keep its doors open?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in my initial response, I have to go and understand what this issue is about. I suspect it might be slightly more complicated than the member opposite is indicating.

But let me tell you, when it comes to long-term care—I want to talk about some of the quality improvements that are happening in long-term care. I was delighted to attend an event earlier this week where I had the opportunity to talk to 1,400 people from the long-term-care sector right across this province. Because of changes they have made related to quality, we are seeing the incidence of pressure ulcers dramatically reduced, the incidence of falls dramatically reduced. We are seeing the levels of depression in residents of long-term care dramatically reduced.

We have added a billion dollars to our long-term-care investment since we came to office, and we are continuing to improve the quality of care in our long-term-care homes.

1120

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Families across Ontario are being squeezed by this government's hydro rate policies and the harmonized sales tax.

Mark and Jo-Ann Johnston from Thunder Bay write, "Our equal billing rate has gone from \$120 a month to \$148 per month."

Why won't the Acting Premier take the HST off Mr. and Mrs. Johnston's hydro bills and give Thunder Bay families a much-needed break?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ontario families also want investments in education and in health care, and they want a plan for a stronger economy in the future.

They want an energy sector that—frankly, it was left in horrible shape over the course of the last 30 years, when none of us came to terms with the reality that the system was not working; it was falling apart.

We're making investments in energy, to build a stronger energy system. We are making changes to our tax system to make it more competitive, to lower income taxes for Ontarians, to lower taxes for businesses, to help

create a stronger culture of job growth in the future. We have provided significant tax relief.

I'm very proud of our northern Ontario energy credit, which affects Thunder Bay, and I'm very proud of our northern industrial electricity price, which will help that part of the province—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What Ontario families are telling me is that they want a government that gives them a break.

Roger Tibbs, a pensioner in Thunder Bay, says, "I am finding it hard to make ends meet with all the price hikes."

Jim Filograna writes, "We did not need this HST forced upon us at this time to make our lives even more difficult."

The NDP's plan to take the HST off hydro just makes sense. Why won't the Acting Premier give Thunder Bay families a break and take the HST off people's hydro bills?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think those same people want to know if that member and her party will eliminate the HST. They've refused to say it.

I do want to put on the record something that was part of RBC's report in September. Let me quote from that report:

"Very strong job creation recently is expected to keep Ontario consumers going to the shopping malls and car dealerships....

"We expect a more moderate yet still robust pace in 2011...."

As the Premier said in the House the other day, it is important to help people in the short term, but it is important to help build a stronger economy by a more efficient tax system and a better energy system.

We're prepared to make the tough decisions and work with Ontarians to manage it.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, we all know that water is one of the most precious resources we have for our well-being, our economic prosperity and our high standard of living.

Constituents in my riding of Ottawa—Orléans want to know about the quality of water coming out of our taps. The chief drinking water inspector's report is the answer. I understand the most recent report was released yesterday. Minister, can you please tell this House the results of this report? Have Ontario municipal water systems improved their standards again this year?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my colleague for the question.

I have good news to share with the House and I'm sure all will want to hear it: Ontario's municipal drinking water is indeed the safest in North America and among

the safest in the entire world. The most recent chief drinking water inspector's annual report confirms that.

In the last five years, we have significantly transformed our approach to protecting Ontario's drinking water with our comprehensive source-to-tap strategy. And here's some very good news: 99.8% of the drinking water tests from municipal drinking water systems met Ontario's strict drinking water standards.

We are making further progress: The number of systems testing 100% every time has improved by some 16%, to almost 50% of all systems. More than 600,000 samples were tested last year from 700 municipal residential—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Minister, my constituents and, I'm sure, all Ontarians will be relieved to know that their drinking water is safer than it has ever been. I'm sure that the hard work of your staff will make sure that all Ontario water systems reach 100% compliance.

The people in my riding of Ottawa—Orléans are also concerned about the safety of the drinking water at their children's schools, their families' summer campsites and the hospitals caring for their loved ones. They want to make sure that the drinking water coming out of their taps is just as safe as it is in their own homes. Is the McGuinty government serious about making the water in those places just as safe as the water in their own homes?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank the member for the supplemental because we have learned some very hard lessons in this province, and I want to let people know that safe, clean drinking water doesn't just stop at your front door. Non-municipal residential systems in designated facilities like hospitals and schools are also subject to testing now, and more than 99% of those samples are also meeting our rigorous standards.

We're also working with our sister Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and with local public units to conduct risk assessments on small water systems. We have 19 committees working on protecting our drinking water from source to tap and back to source right across this province, and we are working with our schools and day nurseries as part of our lead action plan to make sure that their drinking water is also free of this very dangerous toxin—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Last week, I asked the minister when this government would follow through on their promise to release the long-awaited affordable housing strategy. The minister's empty response greatly upset the housing industry and the agencies, but, most of all, it upset the 142,000 Ontarians on the waiting list.

I would ask the minister again: Please tell Ontarians when you are releasing this promised report.

Interjections.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want everyone to be quiet, please, because I'm listening for the clang of thunder, the bolt of lightning to come down because this is the second affordable housing question the Harris-Hudak government has asked since 2003—two questions on affordable housing.

The sincerity on that side cannot be matched by the sincerity on this side. You see, the difference is, we're committed to an affordable—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment. I'm finding it very difficult to hear the minister answer the question, and that difficulty is because of the noise coming from the government side.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I couldn't hear it.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Community Safety.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Economic Development, for a second time.

Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me continue. When the Harris-Hudak government was in place, they cancelled 17,000 units. We're about building units; they're about cancelling units.

We will continue to ensure that our long-term affordable—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I can assure the minister that this isn't the last time the Hudak government is going to be asking questions about affordable housing.

The minister had told us about the consultations that he has held and that he's very, very—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. Minister.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Oxford.

Please continue.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Mr. Speaker, I think you're having a hard time hearing answers because there aren't any.

I understand that the minister is very, very, very, very committed, but what he refuses to tell us is when this report will be released. The government is clearly stalling.

My question is straight to the point and it doesn't require lingering answers. Will the long-awaited affordable housing strategy be released this fall? Yes or no?

1130

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: We're ensuring that the long-term affordable housing strategy is a strategy that works for Ontarians. We're not going to be like you. We're not going to be like the previous Harris-Hudak government, which said that they should get out of affordable housing. At least, that's what the minister at the time said.

We're about ensuring that we put a plan in place that works, that is long-term, that builds units, not about cancelling units, not about destroying 17,000 units, not about keeping people out of homes. We are about building affordable homes, we are about ensuring that there is a housing strategy in place that works.

Yes, we will be releasing that strategy. We will ensure that that strategy works for the people of Ontario, not like the Harris-Hudak—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Order. Member from Oxford. Minister. Order.

New question?

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Peter Kormos: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. In 2004, the Haines report concluded, "The lack of a fish inspection program in Ontario constitutes a risk to the public." Justice Haines called upon the Ministry of Agriculture and Food to implement a mandatory fish inspection program. This provincial government even received \$40 million from the federal government to cover the costs of this and other food safety initiatives.

Why, five years later, does this ministry still not have a fish inspection program or a single fish plant inspector to protect Ontarians who eat that fish?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Certainly, I'm very pleased to rise and speak specifically to meat safety. What I want to talk about today is that our priority is, number one—

Interjections.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: The question is addressed to the Minister of Ag, so that meat falls within. That's why I really want to speak to it, because I know how important it is for people—they know, they understand, they want to buy Ontario product, and they buy Ontario product because our priority is number one.

We know that we have our meat inspectors out on the ground. We have 160 more meat inspectors—107 full-time, 63 part-time. The Haines report brought forward recommendations. We're implementing those recommendations. Ontario products—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Meat comes from animals that walk. Fish swim.

Smoked fish and raw fish are at a particularly high risk of contamination, and there are numerous reports of false labelling of fish used for sushi. Meat plants are inspected monthly, yet the 90 fish plants in Ontario aren't inspected

at all. They're only audited once a year by a Ministry of Natural Resources official, who has no power to impose corrective actions or close down contaminated plants.

Over five years have passed since the Haines report. How many more years are going to have to pass before this government finally protects the health and safety of Ontarians by putting in place a strong and effective fish inspection program?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to answer the question, and the question was addressed to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Within my jurisdiction falls the responsibility of meat inspection. I answered the question last week and this week.

What we know is that with the implementation of the Haines report, 150 meat inspectors are working hard. We have tougher standards and we have more inspectors. People want to buy Ontario products. We have gone in to help the local abattoirs, for an additional \$1.5 million. We have provided up to \$26 million in order to meet the tough standards. Food processing in Ontario has very rigorous standards, and I'm very pleased to respond to that question as the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. I've been getting a lot of phone calls at my office from constituents who have worked many years in the manufacturing sector, where the economic recovery has been slower to take hold. They're concerned about talk that the federal PC government will withdraw employment insurance stimulus funding prematurely; that they're going to stick to some arbitrary deadlines without considering the economic realities faced by Ontarians, especially in the manufacturing sector. Minister, what is our government doing in light of the federal government's actions, which will punish so many Ontario workers?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I want to thank the member for the timely question. Indeed, the federal government is starting to walk away from its funding obligations, impeding the progress of Ontario families as we deal with this difficult worldwide recession. For example, the federal government ended two programs on September 11. The enhancements provided extended benefits to those Ontarians who are looking for work. These stimulus measures provided five weeks of additional employment insurance benefits for all workers and an extra 20 weeks of benefits for long-tenured workers. This means that those long-term workers will no longer be able to receive, on average, over \$7,000 in support as they work toward supporting their families and discovering new careers. Some 42% of Canada's long-tenured workers live in Ontario. That is a huge hindrance to Ontario families as we try to come out of this difficult time—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Minister, you've quite rightly made the point that the federal Conservative government

is not living up to its funding obligations and is short-changing Ontario workers. I understand as well that at the end of March next year, the two-year enhancements to our labour market training agreements will end. This is going to cut \$623 million in federal investments in training for Ontario workers. Minister, what is our government using this funding for? Will we continue to support Ontario workers who want to participate in the new economy?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: I want to thank the member for this very important question and just comment a bit on what some of the \$623 million is used for in terms of helping Ontarians. The funding that the federal government is going to cut is right now used to provide 61,000 learners with literacy and basic skills training. It's helping 120,000 apprentices with their studies and encouraging 17,000 immigrants to integrate into Ontario's job market. By ending this funding, some 16,000 Ontarians could lose opportunities to develop labour market skills, which are crucial in this current economic climate.

Despite the federal government's decision to withdraw this funding, our government remains committed to ensuring that Ontarians are able to retrain and retool so that our province can remain competitive. I remind members that in this year's budget—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

I would just say to the government House leader that I thank her for her comments, but I'm quite comfortable in this chair and will make my decisions accordingly.

Mr. Norm Miller: On a point of order, Speaker: The OLG scandal dates from a ticket sold in December 2003, redeemed in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That is not a point of order.

DEFERRED VOTES

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY TAX CREDIT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR LES ACTIVITÉS DES ENFANTS

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit / Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour les activités des enfants.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 99. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members, please take your seats.

Ms. Smith has moved second reading of Bill 99. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Balkissoon, Bas
Barrett, Toby
Bartolucci, Rick
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Colle, Mike
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Dunlop, Garfield

Elliott, Christine
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Hardeman, Ernie
Hoskins, Eric
Hoy, Pat
Hudak, Tim
Jaczek, Helena
Jones, Sylvia
Kormos, Peter
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
MacLeod, Lisa
Mangat, Amrit
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Norm
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol

Murray, Glen R.
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Savoline, Joyce
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Sterling, Norman W.
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 67; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): So ordered.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NORMAN ATKINS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On behalf of Tim Hudak and Ontario Progressive Conservatives, I am saddened to speak of our good friend Senator Norm Atkins's passing.

It is well known that Senator Atkins was one of the architects of the Big Blue Machine who saw so many Progressive Conservative governments elected here at Queen's Park and throughout Canada. He helped get legends like Bill Davis and Brian Mulroney elected, and in my humble opinion, Senator Atkins was a legend himself.

I first met Senator Atkins as a young staffer on Parliament Hill. He was close friends with Senator Mike Forrestall, a family friend. My first impressions of Senator Atkins were lasting. He was a kind-hearted gentleman who always greeted you with a smile and he always

looked you in the eye. He was a nice man, especially for politics. He had a knack for making even the most junior political operatives among us feel that our contributions were important, and I can tell you that first-hand. I know that for sure.

Senator Atkins's friends will tell you he was the happy warrior. He was always positive, with a great sense of camaraderie and teamwork. He made politics fun, and his trademark was, "Let's get the job done while having some fun." That's why he could rally people to the cause. That would be, of course, the Progressive Conservative cause, to which he was loyal until the end.

Indeed, Senator Atkins leaves behind an impressive political legacy. He also leaves behind loved ones, and on behalf of Tim Hudak, the Progressive Conservative caucus and Progressive Conservatives everywhere, I want to send my condolences to them.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: Hamilton has a long, proud history of producing steel for all of Canada. Again yesterday, workers at US Steel in Hamilton were told that the company would be idling the Hamilton blast furnace, putting uncertainty into the lives of many working families in Hamilton for the second time in two years. This raises many questions about where steel will now be produced for the Canadian market.

US Steel was allowed to take over Stelco's special pension regulation, which permitted them to take 10 years to pay off their pension liability. It appears that US Steel is using the same tactics as they used at Lake Erie Works, where, by locking out workers for a year, they forced concessions on pension plans, benefits etc.

Once again, US Steel is crying poverty to position themselves to attack Local 1005 and its hourly workers. In August, US Steel refused to pay pensioners and pensioners' widows the cost-of-living increase to their pensions. This is a blatant attack on the most vulnerable pensioners, who have no vote when it comes to negotiations.

It's time US Steel did the morally right thing for the families who have dedicated their entire working lives to Stelco and this company. Reinstate the pensioners' indexing immediately and stop playing games to force concessions from the members of Local 1005.

BOX GROVE LIONS CLUB

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Today I'd like to recognize the Box Grove Lions Club in Markham, which was chartered recently as a part of the Lions Clubs International. This club has 67 charter members, which is one of the largest charter memberships of any new Lions Club in the area, and is also one of the few new charter clubs headed by a charter woman president, Lion Neelam Sharma.

The Box Grove Lions Club charter theme is "Building Healthy Communities." As beacons of hope, the club has adopted Markham Stouffville Hospital's mental health program as their charity of choice for the next few years.

On September 19, I had the pleasure of attending the Box Grove Lions Club's charter gala and had the opportunity to meet many of the club's members, which is largely comprised of members of the South Asian community. Some of the Lions I met were past zone chair Lion Gobind Sharma, Dr. Shivani Sharma, Deepika Khurana, Kavita Mehta, Poonam Dhingra, Chaitana Sharma, Sapna Mehta, Sam Joshi and Sanjeev Khurana.

I am certain the Box Grove Lions Club will serve the community of Oak Ridges–Markham well and that their efforts in raising funds for mental health will make a real difference in many families' lives.

Congratulations to all in making this happen.

PLANT CLOSURE

Mr. Toby Barrett: The J.M. Smucker Co. will close its Dunnville vegetable processing and Delhi tank farm for cucumbers by the end of 2011—more Obama Buy America policy driving Ontario investment and jobs south and a huge blow for both Haldimand and Norfolk counties.

Some 150 employees will be out of work and this does not include numerous farmers who will be affected. Sadly, this is Dunnville's final industry in the downtown core, and townfolk are reeling from this economic blow that has come out of the blue.

Haldimand county, as you know, has been suffering for the past four years under this government's mismanagement of the Caledonia land dispute, and in Delhi, this government has continued to ignore the devastation of the tobacco industry, reneging on a promise to provide an exit package to growers. You may remember the former ag minister's words, that this government would be "an active participant in a federally led process to address this issue."

Therefore, it's high time this government step up to the plate and offer incentive to maintain jobs both in Dunnville and Delhi and, at minimum, Ontario's Premier must pick up the phone and put in a call to Smucker.

With every challenge comes an opportunity, and my hope is that a willing buyer or two will see these facilities as an opportunity. But this government has to show some leadership and commence a close working relationship with Smucker and other interested stakeholders.

SWIM FOR MENTAL HEALTH FUNDRAISER

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to take a moment to recognize the incredible efforts of a constituent of mine. Long-time Oakville resident Frank Zamuner recently hosted the second annual Swim for Mental Health at Brookdale Pool to raise money for the purchase of essential equipment for the mental health program at Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital, and to raise awareness about mental health illnesses and to eliminate the stigma attached to them.

Mental health issues are very personal to Frank, but he's quoted as saying the following: "There's nothing to be afraid of, there's nothing to be ashamed of."

In 2005, while recovering from surgery, he discovered it was difficult to reduce his active lifestyle and eventually that led to a depression. While seeking help himself, Frank found there's a great need for psychiatrists, psychologists and mental health medical equipment and decided he was going to address this by turning his swimming into a fundraiser.

For five days in August, Frank swam 110 lengths every day and, with the help of 30 other swimmers, a total of 3,500 lengths were completed. In two years, he's raised more than \$35,000, with great support from Oakville residents and local companies such as Goodale Miller, BMO Nesbitt Burns, Swiss Chalet and the Tent Renters.

Frank, I would like to congratulate you on your swim, on your fundraising efforts and as well for raising awareness about mental health illnesses in our community and the need to eliminate stigma.

SOUTH MARCH HIGHLANDS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I rise today to inform the Legislature of the efforts being made in Kanata to protect the South March Highlands. This 895-hectare piece of land is located along the north edge of Kanata and is part of the Canadian Shield uplands. It is more than a billion years old and is home to more than 654 species, including 18 that are at risk of going extinct.

The area was described in a 1997 report commissioned by the region as "one of the most significant areas in" the region "for maintaining biodiversity and ecological functions and support a variety of landscape features found nowhere else in the" world.

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Thirty hectares of this pristine land is slated for imminent development, much to the dismay of many of my constituents. This area is locally known as the Beaver Pond area, and I have heard from many constituents who are passionate about saving this area.

I am pleased that currently the city of Ottawa is negotiating with the developer who owns this land, with a view to either purchasing or expropriating this land. I encourage those parties to continue their negotiation, but urge them to come to a successful conclusion soon so that we will not lose this environmental gem to development.

SENIORS' TAX CREDIT

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Our government is dedicated to helping Ontario's seniors maintain their quality of life. One of our latest initiatives designed to make life a little bit easier is the Ontario energy and property tax credit.

We are proposing enhanced relief for 740,000 seniors through an annual credit of up to \$1,025 to help with energy costs and property taxes. Our proposal also seeks

to increase the amount seniors can earn and still be eligible for this credit.

This enhanced credit would be on top of the Ontario sales tax credit of \$260 for qualifying seniors and families. This enhanced credit would also further complement our government's doubling of the seniors' property tax grant to \$500. The Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues opposed both of those measures to help Ontario seniors, but with Bill 109, we are giving them a chance to change their ways and vote to help seniors in this province.

CANADA-PAKISTAN TRADE EXPOSITION

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I appreciate this opportunity to announce before this chamber, as well as to Ontarians broadly, that there will be an international single-country Canada-to-Pakistan trade exposition which will be taking place October 28 to October 31, 2010, not coincidentally within my riding of Etobicoke North, at the Toronto Congress Centre.

This particular trade exposition is being organized by the government of Pakistan and the government of Ontario. Contributing is the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry and a trade arm of the government of Pakistan known as TDAP, the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan.

It will be a remarkable opportunity. It'll be another venue of Universal Promotions, led ably by Mr. Amir Shamsi, under the guidance of His Excellency Mr. Khan, consul general of Pakistan to Ontario.

A number of different vendors will be coming, with reference to: onyx; marble; carpets and rugs; rice; rock salt; jewellery; gold; leather; textile goods—garments and cloths of all descriptions; medical, surgical and dental instruments; handicrafts; sporting goods; software and more.

Reverse opportunities for Canadian firms will be in the sectors of energy, power, water, rebuilding and reconstruction, housing and, of course, medical knowledge transfer.

I think the 300,000-strong Pakistani Canadians who live in the province of Ontario will be very gratified if we contribute and help the country of Pakistan in its hour of need with the economic prosperity initiatives.

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On October 1, 61 years ago, an important event took place in the history of mankind: the founding of the People's Republic of China. The people's government passed a resolution on the national day of the People's Republic of China, on December 2, 1949, and declared that October 1 is the National Day.

This National Day is celebrated throughout mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau with a variety of government-organized festivities, including fireworks and concerts. Public places such as Tiananmen Square in Bei-

jing are decorated in a festive theme. Portraits of revered leaders such as Sun Yat-sen are publicly displayed.

Tomorrow, October 1, we in Canada, as well, will show our deep respect for the people of China by raising its national colours right here in front of the Legislature at noon, 12 o'clock, in the presence of Mr. Ligang Chen, consul general; Meifang Zhang, deputy consul; Mr. Ping Tan, president of the National Congress of Chinese Canadians; Mr. Hughes Eng, vice-chairman of the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto, and many other distinguished Chinese Canadians.

We are also mindful of the contributions that Chinese Canadians have made right here in the development of Canada and the many sacrifices that they endured. Some monuments right here in Toronto speak to that fact, such as the monument to the Chinese railroad workers.

When I visited China, I was surprised to find that every Chinese schoolchild knew about Canadian physician Norman Bethune, who ultimately sacrificed his life in the service of others in the time of civil war.

May the cordial relationship between the People's Republic of China and Canada prosper and grow in the years to come. Congratulations to all those who celebrate it.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition that was signed by hundreds, if not thousands, of people from the great riding of Oxford and the neighbouring riding of Perth-Wellington. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance of Stratford, Ontario, in their Vision 2013 report to the South West LHIN, is planning to reduce the operating hours of St. Marys Memorial Hospital emergency department from 24/7 to 16/7 and reduce the number of acute care beds and also move rehabilitative beds from St. Marys Memorial Hospital to Seaforth general hospital, which would force residents of St. Marys and surrounding areas to travel 51 kilometres or more to receive rehabilitative care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Save our hospital: We, the undersigned, urge our leaders not to accept the recommendations in the Vision 2013 report and not to reduce our emergency room hours of operation and not to reduce our acute care beds."

I affix my signature, as I agree with this petition.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This petition is from hundreds of people in the 905 area.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims

of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning ... systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations etc.;

"Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Tarion Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Tarion Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Tarion agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Tarion and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

I couldn't agree more, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to give it to Brandon to be delivered to the desk.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

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SOLAR ENERGY PROJECTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s Liberal government is forcing Ontario municipalities to build solar-powered generation facilities without any local say or local approval; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government transferred decision-making power from elected municipal governments to unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats, who are accountable to no one; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government has removed any kind of appeal process for municipalities or for people living in close proximity to these projects; and

“Whereas Tim Hudak, Jim Wilson and the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party have committed to restoring local decision-making powers and to building renewable energy projects only in places where they are welcome, wanted and at prices Ontarians can afford;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government restore local decision-making powers for renewable energy projects and immediately stop forcing new solar developments on municipalities that have not approved and whose citizens do not want them in their community.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

G20 SUMMIT

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have a petition that’s certified by the Clerk, pursuant to standing order 39(c). It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads:

“Whereas Ontarians have serious concerns about the events leading up to and during the G20 summit;

“Whereas more than \$1 billion of taxpayer money was spent on the G20, yet a full accounting of these costs has not been provided to the public;

“Whereas there are critical questions about whether the fundamental rights and freedoms of Ontarians were compromised during the G20;

“Whereas the government willingly withheld information about laws that directly affected the freedom and liberties of Ontarians;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government immediately call a public inquiry examining all events leading up to and during the G20 summit.”

RECYCLING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I’ve got a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the grade 7H students of Lisgar Middle School believe that the current method of recycling used dry cell batteries and other household hazardous waste materials is not successful. We have attempted to create the easiest and most comprehensive method of recycling batteries and other household hazardous materials (as illustrated in the letter attached). This initiative fits directly into the same frame of reference as the blue box recycling and composting programs, which have encouraged individuals and households to recycle as much as they already do. We implore the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to give this proposed initiative of a household red box recycling program your approval into law;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We, the undersigned, would like to support, enthusiastically, the Recycling Raptors of grade 7H at Lisgar Middle School in their proposal of a household red box recycling program, and implore the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass into law such a program, as described in the attached letter outlining the red box recycling initiative, as presented.”

I’ve been at the school and I support this wholeheartedly. I will sign it and give it to Thomas to bring to the table.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have here another petition that was presented to me by Susan DeRoo in Otterville, in the great riding of Oxford. Obviously, these petitions keep coming even though the events of the day may have changed.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care; and

“Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal; and

“Whereas now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s cuts will:

—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends;

—increase wait times and line-ups for patients;

—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

“Therefore we, the undersigned ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies.”

I affix my signature as I agree with this petition.

RECYCLING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm going to join with my colleague from Oakville in reading this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the grade 7H students of Lisgar Middle School believe that the current method of recycling used dry cell batteries and other household hazardous waste ... is not successful. We have attempted to create the easiest and most comprehensive method of recycling batteries and other household hazardous materials.... This initiative fits ... into the same frame of reference as the blue box recycling and composting programs, which have encouraged individuals and households to recycle as much as they already do." We petition "the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to give this proposed initiative of a household red box recycling program your approval...;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"... to support, enthusiastically, the Recycling Raptors of grade 7H at Lisgar Middle School, in their proposal of a household red box recycling program, and ... to pass ... such a program" into law "as described...."

I'd like to acknowledge Carol Grant of tenth Line for having collected these signatures. I'll send the petition down with page Henry.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of the province of Ontario has entered into an agreement with the government of Canada to implement the harmonized goods and services tax; and

"Whereas the majority of Ontario taxpayers are opposed to the implementation of this tax; and

"Whereas the HST will add 8% to many goods and services where currently only the 5% GST is charged and will result in increased costs for all Ontarians and may create financial hardship for lower-income families and individuals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government rescind its decision to implement the HST in Ontario."

I agree with that petition, and I will sign it. I'd like to thank the council of the town of New Tecumseh for sending it to me.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition signed by a great number of people, primarily from the city of Woodstock and Oxford county.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Oxford do not want Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$500,000; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families, farmers and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

I affix my signature. I totally agree with it. It was as recently as yesterday that I got caught in that bind where they put an 8% tax on haircuts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further petitions? There appearing to be no further petitions, orders of the day.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO CALEDONIA ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'ENQUÊTE PUBLIQUE RELATIVE À LA SITUATION EXISTANT À CALEDONIA

Mr. Chudleigh moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 73, An Act to provide for a public inquiry to discover the truth about the provincial role in the ongoing dispute on the Douglas Creek Estates property in Caledonia / Projet de loi 73, Loi prévoyant une enquête publique pour découvrir la vérité sur le rôle de la Province dans le conflit en cours sur la propriété Douglas Creek Estates à Caledonia.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: For close to half a decade, the residents of Caledonia and Six Nations have lived under the shadow of a land claims dispute. The response of the McGuinty government has been negligible. The impact on residents of Caledonia and Six Nations has been significant.

In 1784, the Haldimand Tract was granted to the Six Nations in recognition of the support they provided to the British crown during the American Revolution. Over the next 211 years, the majority of that land was transferred or sold. Today, the Six Nations claim that large areas were in fact stolen from them, and that the land was

transferred illegally or sold without adequate compensation.

It is in this context that 29 land claims have been filed by the Six Nations, including a claim against the Douglas Creek Estates property, which is part of the Plank Road/Port Dover claim. To date, this claim and 27 of the 29 filed land claims remain outstanding.

In 1992, Henco Industries purchased Douglas Creek Estates and in 2005 announced their intention to develop the land, despite being advised of the ongoing dispute. In response, a small group of Six Nations protestors moved onto the site in 2006.

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Over the year, violent protests between the Six Nations and residents of Caledonia ensued. The emergency response team of the OPP was required to address serious threats of violence and clashes between the different groups of protestors. Suddenly, a peaceful community was transformed into a dangerous conflict zone, with flag wars, violent protests, vandalism, blockades and a citizen mafia. It didn't feel like Ontario, it didn't feel like Caledonia, but sadly, it was.

In the years that followed, conflicts continued and lawsuits were commenced. In 2006, a class action lawsuit against the province was filed. In February 2010, Justice Crane certified the class proceedings in which, amongst other things, the plaintiffs are claiming damages against the province for nuisance, negligence and breach of statutory duty, all in consequence of the occupation by native protestors of the former Douglas Creek Estates and the events thereafter.

In 2007, David Brown and Dana Chatwell launched a \$7-million lawsuit against the OPP and the Ontario government. After violent protests in 2006, the couple returned to their Argyle Street home to find their treasured belongings destroyed. They claimed that they were under siege, trapped between the occupied land and the barricades put in place by the Six Nations protestors. To make matters worse, the government was accused of orchestrating a trial by ambush after two boxes filled with OPP reports and notes were delivered to the couple's lawyers days before their trial began, leaving little time for reviewing them. In 2008, Ms. Chatwell collapsed and was taken by ambulance to a hospital with a suspected heart attack. At trial, Mr. Brown was forced to leave the courtroom to vomit. For years, this couple and their son had clearly suffered as a result of the ongoing dispute in Caledonia. They were only one family amongst many.

However, even when the government finally reached a confidential out-of-court settlement with this family in 2009, consolation for Caledonia families was scarce. The facts of their experiences were buried, along with the amount of the settlement. Questions remained unanswered and a resolution a distant possibility.

I introduced Bill 73 with the hope that the McGuinty government was finally ready to address the serious ongoing concerns in Caledonia. Under the bill, a commission would inquire into and report on the conduct of the government in respect of its legal obligations, policy

decisions and directions and influence exerted on public bodies as it relates to the dispute in Caledonia. It will also make recommendations in the hope of improving the government's response to that dispute and other future disputes, if and when they occur. Areas that the commission will examine include the trade of illegal cigarettes, administration of justice, policing, community safety and security, and the dispute's effect on Haldimand county, Brant county and the city of Brantford.

Before speaking about a few of these things, I'd like to address the response by the McGuinty government over the past half-decade. The PC caucus has consistently called upon the Premier to live up to these responsibilities. The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs recognizes that, although many of the Six Nations grievances fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government, Ontario has played an important role by encouraging an environment where peaceful and productive negotiations can take place. However, more often than not, the McGuinty government simply responded to PC questions by pointing to the federal government in Ottawa. This response has been unacceptable and has completely ignored the serious concerns in Caledonia. Bill 73 will examine the provincial response to this dispute and will make recommendations to ensure that future disputes are not left to simmer at the expense of the parties living through them.

For example, the commission will look at the response of the Ministry of Revenue. The minister is responsible for promoting "the integrity of the province's self-assessing tax system by encouraging compliance through taxpayer education and customer service, while discouraging non-compliance through enforcement activities." However, in 2008 the Auditor General noted this government's continued failure to address illegal cigarettes. The auditor noted that his previous recommendations had not been implemented by the McGuinty government. He also recognized that the Premier's tobacco tax rate increase had raised the incentive to evade taxes. He concluded, "As a result, it remains our view that the ministry's current policies, procedures and information technology systems are still inadequate."

At a time when this government is raising taxes, creating eco fees and implementing the HST, they are ignoring illegal cigarettes, which, the auditor noted, created in 2007 a tax gap of about half a billion dollars. The McGuinty government has ignored the illegal smoke shop operating on provincial land on Argyle Street in Caledonia. The McGuinty government has tried to address legal cigarettes, but has, for the most part, ignored illegal cigarettes. The McGuinty government increased the tobacco tax rate and then doubled the tax on cigarettes when they introduced the HST, pushing people further towards contraband tobacco.

The consequences? Today, nearly 50% of the cigarettes smoked in Ontario are illegal. An analysis of cigarette butts by the Ontario Convenience Stores Association in 2007 at schools in Brantford showed that approximately 35% of the cigarettes were contraband. At one school, about 46% were contraband. We have seen an

increase in the availability of illegal cigarettes for youth, an increase in funding for organized crime, and an increase in the likelihood that people will experience the serious health consequences of smoking.

Another consequence has been economic. In 2009 the sale of contraband tobacco saw convenience store operators lose \$2.5 billion in sales. Closures were often heavily influenced by contraband tobacco sales. Under Bill 73, a commission will help to ensure the Minister of Revenue takes responsibility for his or her duties in the ongoing land dispute so that the health, security and economic risks associated with contraband tobacco are diminished and Ontario laws are enforced.

The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services should be committed to ensuring that Ontario's communities are supported and protected by law enforcement and public safety systems that are safe, secure, effective, efficient and accountable. That is what the website says. As of 2009, policing costs alone accounted for close to \$46 million in Caledonia, yet illegal smoke shops and violence continue unaddressed.

The police have done a commendable job, keeping relative peace in Caledonia. I know my colleague the member from Simcoe North will speak about this further. However, where it has been the minister's responsibility to lead, allegations that illegal activities have been overlooked and charges bypassed abound. The rule of law has not been consistently upheld for close to half a decade in Caledonia, and the precedent it has created in the province of Ontario is problematic. A commission can examine the minister's response, his influence on the administration of justice in Caledonia and the safety of Caledonia streets.

The Attorney General is the chief law officer, but he's also a cabinet minister. In the former role, he or she must act in the public interest, and in the latter, he or she must act as a representative of the ministry and the cabinet. The current Attorney General is also Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and has to represent the interests of aboriginal groups across the province. As we have often said on this side of the House, the law must not only be done but it must be seen to be done. There have been questions about a potential conflict of interest in lawsuits resulting from the dispute in Caledonia. A commission may help to address these concerns and restore faith in our system of justice.

The rule of law must be enforced and applied equally to all so that our system remains fair and our communities remain safe. There are parties responsible for the resolution of the dispute in Caledonia. However, from the McGuinty government we have only heard blame. Any time this government can point fingers elsewhere, they do, but there has been no responsibility taken for the impacts their complacency and disregard have had on the people involved in this dispute. The result? Close to half a decade later, there has been no resolution for the Six Nations or for the people of Caledonia. There has been violence, economic hardship and growing animosity, but there has been no closure and no ability to move forward.

The McGuinty government has become incapable of handling the needs of the people, who, regretfully, must suffer the consequences. My colleague the member for Haldimand-Norfolk introduced a similar piece of legislation last year, which the McGuinty government rejected. I hope this year they will finally take a new path towards resolution, towards building on best practices. The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs notes, "Ontario is committed to making sure land claim negotiations address the interests and concerns of people who use, live or work on lands within the claim area." I hope the McGuinty government will show itself to be equally committed to resolving ongoing disputes, including the dispute on the Douglas Creek Estates property and the parties involved. It is only in addressing the issues, not by leaving them to simmer, that together we can move forward peacefully, prosperously and with respect for each other.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: A most interesting bill and proposal. I was looking forward to the debate on it and I am, quite frankly, excitedly looking forward to how the government responds.

I read the bill very carefully, and I want to say this: This is the most incredible screw-up that any government could ever be a party to. The fact that now in 2010, four years later, this dispute rages on, and in view of the incredible resources that the government has to bring to this dispute, is mind-boggling.

I think people should be very careful, because native land claims are not going to disappear. They're not going to go away. They're not going to go away in Caledonia, they're not going to go away along that whole stretch along the river there, along the Grand River, and they're not going to go away in other parts of Ontario. This government's failure, its catatonic response to this crisis, does not bode well for the future, in view of this government's Bill 191, its Far North Act, and how that legislation, forced upon First Nations people in northern Ontario, is provoking understandably militant responses.

I find incredibly curious the question of the acquisition of this particular land by the developer—the Douglas Creek Estates property, as it's been called. I suppose real estate lawyers in the Grand River area as well as other areas are going to be far more cautious when they're clearing title to a piece of property for a potential owner. When the author of this bill says that it was known at the time of acquisition of this property that the land was the subject matter of a dispute around ownership, one would have thought that the developer would have been far more cautious before simply moving the bulldozers in and claiming title. That's why, when I look at section 6, what are proposed as the terms of reference for what will be, for all intents and purposes, a public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act, there's no consideration of what diligence, due or otherwise, was performed by the developer who acquired this property. It seems to me that the government should be very clear in warning potential

property purchasers that when one purchases or purports to purchase a property that is the subject matter or has the capacity to be the subject matter—and this certainly did. This isn't news. This wasn't a surprise. This wasn't a shock. This didn't come out of the blue. Discussions about the legitimate ownership of that land—not just the Douglas Creek Estates land, but huge swaths of land along the Grand River—are longtime and notorious. It seems to me that this government should be a little more active—a lot more active—in explaining to people that no, caveat emptor. You perform some due diligence, and if you buy a piece of land or you think you're buying a piece of land that has dubious ownership in terms of the vendor, then be forewarned: You may be buying something that the vendor has no right to sell, in which case you haven't bought it.

I don't want the developer or his or her lawyer to write me a nasty letter—I could care less if I get a nasty letter—but I'm not sure that the developer displayed the sensitivity and the responsiveness that would have been critical to reducing the intensity of the dispute that has flowed.

I agree, these are the sorts of things that an inquiry, if it were included in the terms of reference, could consider. But I don't see that in the author's section 6, which effectively is the terms of reference. Oh, and don't give me stuff about 6(1)(f): “any other matters that the commission considers relevant.” Commissions are loath to write their own terms of reference.

I suspect the government, in the speaking notes that it's delivered to its backbenchers who are going to be responding to this proposal today, is going to talk—maybe it's going to talk about the huge cost of public inquiries.

It's been a tough haul, getting public inquiries out of this Liberal government. There have been a few issues which cried out for a thorough public inquiry. I acknowledge that they're expensive. Justice can be expensive sometimes. Fairness can be expensive sometimes. The maintenance and furthering of people's rights can be expensive sometimes. Well, democracy can be expensive sometimes. But to fail to inquire in a full and broad way can bring costs that we don't even dare imagine, that at this moment we can't even contemplate.

As I say, this government, the McGuinty government, is courting more serious land disputes with First Nations communities. Bill 191, the Far North Act, guaranteed that.

I regret that, while New Democrats support the concept of an inquiry into the full phenomenon at Caledonia, because of the limited terms of reference in the bill, we can't support this particular bill.

The trade of illegal cigarettes is an interesting inclusion. I'm not sure how much that has to do with the land dispute, although I know that New Democrats are as concerned as anybody about the marketing of illegal cigarettes and the impact especially on young people who buy those cigarettes. But we're fearful that the inclusion of the trade of illegal cigarettes in the terms of reference here somehow reveals a not-so-subtle secondary agenda, and it's an agenda that we have no interest in joining.

The inquiry should be about this government's failure to have mediated a resolution. Oh, they paraded in their high-priced, what do you call them, publicity-seeking celebrity mediators. I think David Peterson was one of them. Good God, David Peterson? He's on the board of Rogers Communications Inc., which runs Rogers cable television. He can't run a bloody cable television company. How is he expected to mediate a serious dispute like this? The people of Ontario sent him packing with his tail between his legs in 1990.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, no, it was silly. You saw that parade of so-called mediators. These people were of that celebrity mediator ilk. The fact is, I know that there are some very capable mediators here in this province of Ontario whom I've spoken with over the course of the last several years who would have loved to participate in a mediation of this dispute—capable people, people who have been involved in international mediations; people who have been involved in huge disputes and complex ones, public disputes.

The Chiefs of Ontario wrote a letter. I recall it clearly because Howard Hampton and I brought it to the attention of this Premier and this government frequently. The Chiefs of Ontario said, “Please, province of Ontario, create a forum, a venue, in which land disputes like Caledonia's land dispute can be resolved”—not necessarily a trial court. Look, that's part of the problem. The courts are slow, expensive and ponderous. If we have to rely upon the courts and the civil process to address this dispute, it will be happening, it will be ongoing after we're long gone. I regret that the terms of reference don't necessarily include that.

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Furthermore, I'm hard pressed to believe, really believe, that there has been no contact between the government and the leadership of the OPP, in particular, as it was, Julian Fantino, during the course of this dispute. I can't for the life of me believe, in view of the sensitivity of this matter and the political implications for a government—witness the last government, the government prior to this one—that there hasn't been direction through not-inappropriate channels, deputy ministers and ADMs, about the government's interest in this matter.

The government is walking a tightrope where it wants to be neither fish nor fowl. It wants to trade off legitimate aboriginal First Nations interests for electoral interests. It seems to me that if the government had taken a clear stand in support of First Nations communities around legitimate land claims, that would have gone a long way to ending this dispute a long time ago.

Public inquiry, yes, and a public inquiry about a whole lot of things that aren't even contemplated by this legislation; a public inquiry not to attack and undermine native, First Nations, aboriginal land claims, but a public inquiry that is designed to create a system, a structure, a process whereby these land claims disputes can be resolved effectively, efficiently, inexpensively—as inexpensively as possible—and peaceably. The McGuinty government

has failed to provide that in this regard, and they have to be held accountable for the crisis that's ongoing in Caledonia.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: This is sort of a strange debate. I listened very carefully to the member for Halton as he talked about his own bill, or at least introduced his own bill, and then talked about everything except his bill. Then I heard perhaps one of the great orators in our chamber at the moment, the member from Welland, who is capable of slicing and dicing just about anybody on almost anything, and he too talked about everything except what was in the bill.

Now, the member for Halton, in his introduction, read all the talking points that very clearly were written for him by the PC caucus, so this clearly means that—I don't think this is a serious bill, but I think this is just an excuse to repeat all of the usual Conservative complaints.

Rather than talk about his own bill, the member for Halton spent most of his time talking about cigarettes and the HST, but that's not what the bill is about. So let's talk about what the bill is about.

This bill includes a bizarre clause, and let me read it exactly: that, the calling of this so-called public inquiry "shall ensure that it does not interfere with any ongoing legal proceedings relating to these matters." So he wants to call a public inquiry over something that hasn't been resolved and assumes that a public inquiry won't interfere with a matter that hasn't been resolved. Hmm, I wonder why we're going to be voting against this bill.

Undoubtedly, a public inquiry is going to interfere with any ongoing legal proceedings of which, presumably, the province is a party. Bizarre. Even if done, how can this but provide for a less than satisfactory inquiry? It would be limited in scope to matters that are not currently subject to ongoing legal proceedings, which will likely frustrate just about everybody involved in it. Following me in the next rotation, a truly eminent lawyer who is a member here, the member for Willowdale, is going to take this apart in further detail.

If you call a public inquiry over something that hasn't been resolved but is still in process, then obviously you are going to either encourage or inflame radical elements on either side. So I then question the motivation: Why is this being brought up at this point? As well, if you're going to call a public inquiry, which forces sides to entrench themselves into whatever positions they may occupy now or feel that it might be expedient to occupy during a public inquiry, surely you anticipate that you're going to jeopardize any reasonable chance that you might have of a successfully negotiated solution by focusing attention and resources away from the problem and onto the media circus. Hmm, I don't think so.

If the member for Halton says, to use his words, "Law must not only be done but be seen to be done," I find it odd that in 1999 he voted against holding just such an inquiry into the Ipperwash shooting of a First Nations man, Dudley George.

Let's look at some of the other salient points on this. Responsibility for First Nations affairs rests very clearly and unambiguously with one level of government, and it's the federal government. And at the heart of this matter is a 200-year-old land claim. Ontario has urged the federal government to rekindle the negotiation process. In fact, the last negotiation was held on October 9, 2009, almost one year ago.

If the member for Halton and his Conservative Party truly want to see this issue resolved—and it's a serious issue, about serious matters, that has affected a lot of honest people—why haven't they started talking to their cousins in Ottawa, who are the party in power and who can start the process to resolve this?

Ontario has worked, and will continue to work, with all parties to find an acceptable resolution to these matters. For example, the province is supportive of the Brant county-Six Nations green energy accord and the recently signed memorandum of understanding between Six Nations and Samsung. These agreements are going to play an important role in the future economic development for Six Nations and for Brant county.

Someone who has played a real hidden leadership role here, someone who has brought people together, worked hard, spent his time, paid his dues, listened to the sides, and has consistently been someone who has been part of the solution and not part of the problem is the local MPP, the member for Brant. He's a local leader that the PC caucus should have listened to and talked to before bringing forth this poorly drafted bill that even they didn't want to talk about.

The member for Brant regularly talks with local business owners. He's the guy who has his name on the ballot in the local community. He's the guy who talks to the leaders from Brantford, Brant county and the Six Nations. He has even organized a summit so they can all talk together.

I have to say that I'm surprised and disappointed at the quality of the bill and, given its low quality, not surprised that the member from Halton didn't even talk about his own bill.

The member for Willowdale will add more details to this. I won't support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today to make a few comments on Bill 73, An Act to provide for a public inquiry to discover the truth about the provincial role in the ongoing dispute on the Douglas Creek Estates property in Caledonia.

As I see the bill, and I'm going to read the explanatory note, "The bill requires the Lieutenant Governor in Council to establish a commission to inquire into and report on the provincial role in the ongoing dispute on the Douglas Creek Estates property in Caledonia and to make recommendations. The commission has the powers of a commission under a public inquiry. Once the inquiry begins, the commission must make an interim report in six months and a final report in 12 months."

Why I think it would be wise for the House to support this legislation is that we've learned a lot from some of our other public inquiries. We've implemented a number of the recommendations as a result of the Walkerton tragedy and Justice Dennis O'Connor's report. We've also made recommendations on the Ipperwash Inquiry that this government, the Liberal government of Ontario, came forward with. It certainly wasn't a federal inquiry; it was a provincial inquiry the last time I checked, and I'm surprised that the previous speaker would say it was strictly a federal responsibility. Then we have inquiries, of course, that we've done just in the last few years, like the Goudge inquiry on the role of the chief coroner. As we know, in a number these cases the recommendations have not even been completely fulfilled at this point, and we've still got some serious concerns about the Goudge inquiry.

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I think the member from Welland made a very, very important point, and that's something that can really blow up in our faces right now. There are a number of outstanding land claims across the province of Ontario, and I don't think we've really made a lot of friends in the First Nations community with the passing of the Far North Act and the fact that we've removed the committee hearings and forced this bill through the House. As you know, there's an outcry across northern Ontario and with First Nations across the province on how that was handled. I think it's almost a recipe for more disruptions and barricades in future years.

When you look at the government's role, I think you have to look at how we can improve upon what already happened there. We know that the federal government and the provincial government, from what my understanding is, haven't met for a year and a half, and this is from the original blockades that were set up in 2006. It's a year and a half since the lawyers have gotten together on this. It has disrupted the whole community. It's still a blemish on the community. I think that we have a role, as politicians, to come forward with some recommendations on how we can handle future land claim disputes and how we can handle future disruptions and blockades that may require provincial intervention.

I want to talk for a moment about the OPP. I've been the critic for the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services for the last seven years, and I've watched how former Minister Kwinter, Minister Bartolucci and now Minister Bradley, along with Bentley and Bryant, have tried to handle the Caledonia issue. Of course, how they tried to handle it was that they stayed way from it. No one ever went to it. The Premier stayed as far away from Caledonia as he could, left them to defend themselves and left the Ontario Provincial Police as what they call the meat in the sandwich.

I give full respect to the Ontario Provincial Police that no one died in these incidents because, in so many cases, there were fist fights and rock throwing and people could have caused a lot of damage and problems. I think the Ontario Provincial Police should be applauded for the

fine work they've done in saving lives in this particular case. But at the same time, it cost the Ontario Provincial Police a tremendous amount of money out of their budget, money that could have been well spent in highway traffic control, on human trafficking, and on guns and gangs. You just name all of the different sections of the Ontario Provincial Police and money had to be taken away from those areas in order to prop up the officers in Caledonia. At one time, I believe there was something like 300 officers in the Caledonia area at something like 124 per shift, trying to keep peace and watch the concerns.

I think a number of the questions can be answered here with an inquiry. I know we've asked for this in the past. Obviously we wouldn't expect the government to support an inquiry because this has been a blemish on the Liberal government that's probably bigger than some of their HST and hydro blunders. However, as we move forward, I think the member from Halton has some great ideas here, some great comments, and I would expect that this House should support the thoughts he has around a public inquiry and support Bill 73.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm pleased to join in this debate. I've got about six minutes and I want to make five points with respect to problems with this private member's bill introduced by Mr. Chudleigh, and I say in no particular order because they're all problems or flaws that, in my view, strike right to the heart of the usefulness or the motive of this legislation.

First of all, there are various legal proceedings that are in various stages of legal process throughout the province. It is a well-known and a well-accepted point of procedure that this Legislature collectively, individual members of this Legislature, or indeed anyone with public or private responsibilities, not interfere with legal proceedings that are working their way through. That's to protect the independence of the deciders of the issues in those proceedings.

Picture what's being asked here. There are various legal proceedings out there that are working their way through the system. They're governed by a set of rules, procedures, processes and so on. Then the Legislature steps in and orders an inquiry, which operates under another set of rules. So people who are involved in either the proceedings contemplated by this private member's bill or in the other legal proceedings that are proceeding at another level are caught in a conflict. They've got two sets of rules to follow. The two sets of rules may or may not be in conflict.

The better procedure has always been to start these matters of public inquiry after the events have concluded—if there's to be an inquiry. Then it takes a review of everything that has gone on before it.

The second point is, the terms of reference proposed are so broad as to be unworkable. Let me just work through the terms of reference.

Section 6, duties: Within 60 days of the commission being set up, the commission should start its inquiry. This is what it should look into:

“(a) the trade of illegal cigarettes;

“(b) the administration of justice”—I mean, that is such a wide, comprehensive, broad topic. Where on earth would you start on something like that?

“(c) policing”—again, just a general reference to policing. What does that mean as a term of reference?

“(d) community safety and security;

“(e) the dispute’s effect in Haldimand county, Brant county and the city of Brantford”—what do they mean by “effect”? It’s just so broad as to be unworkable.

Then, as if they’ve thrown all of those things into the hopper and they’re going to ask some commissioner to sort out just what the legislation expects that commissioner to do, they throw in this catch-all:

“(f) any other matters that the commission considers relevant.”

Now we are way, way off into the outer reaches of the universe on this, such that if the commission were set up, it would be hard, if not impossible, for it to contemplate what it’s supposed to be doing and it would be hard, if not impossible, to contemplate an end date. It is too comprehensive, so as to be a meaningless direction.

The third flaw is the federal government. The federal government has a huge role to play in this, along with the other players. When you look at section 1 of the bill, it specifically says “inquire into the provincial role” and “provincial role” means the conduct of the government of Ontario....” But nowhere in the bill is it contemplated to review the role of the federal government. Aboriginal affairs, the negotiation of these treaties going back some 200 years, has always been a federal responsibility. At a minimum, they’ve got to bring in the federal government on this.

Then, just to add insult to injury, back when we had the Ipperwash situation here in Ontario and there was discussion about a public inquiry, on December 9, nine members, all of whom are still members of the official opposition today, opposed an inquiry into the Ipperwash dealings; and again on June 5, 2003, 12 members, all of whom are still current members of the PC caucus oppose who have brought forth this legislation. So I have to ask myself; what changed their thinking on this? Well, what has changed their thinking is, this is just an exercise in stirring up the political pot, in stirring up the folks over in that part of the province, in stirring up the aboriginal groups. Just creating mischief. That’s what this bill is designed—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate?

1410

Mr. Toby Barrett: On behalf of people in Haldimand–Norfolk and Caledonia and, if I may, Brantford as well, I rise today to ask Premier McGuinty for help. It has come to this. It has been four and a half years. We need help.

They say that the only hydro bill that has not gone up in Ontario is the free electricity that is being supplied to the militants that still occupy that subdivision. If anyone here hasn’t been down to Caledonia lately, I can tell you

that the barricades are still up, in spite of the David Peterson negotiations so many years ago, and they have been up for four and a half years now. I was there last night. I can attest to that.

So it has been four and a half years: four and a half years of weeds, broken street lights, a burnt-out tractor-trailer, a toppled hydro tower—these things are still there. The tractor-trailer is at the entrance to the subdivision. No police patrols on Douglas Creek Estates—to their credit, the OPP, as I understand, now do patrol Sixth Line, and the families that live along that road are very thankful for that.

The warrior flag flies on that part of Caledonia’s main street, not the Canadian flag, as we all know. Again, I was down there last night. After four and a half years, there are still no wires on the new power towers that march into Caledonia from Niagara. Recognizing that discretion is the better part of valour, the security cars now sit behind the fence at the Caledonia transfer station. Both Caledonia’s portion of provincial Highway 6 and Argyle Street, as we have heard, are graced by illegal smoke shacks located on crown land and located on Hydro One land. I give Six Nations credit: They are dealing with some of these smoke shacks that are on their property located along provincial Highway 6.

These are some reasons that I continue to feel that this warrants a public inquiry. Thank God Christie Blatchford’s book on Caledonia is coming out October 26. That is going to be the inquiry; that will be out of your hands. Four and a half years ago—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: They can bad-mouth her. They can demonize Christie Blatchford then.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Garfield. Here’s another example: Hundreds of us, including dozens of police, watched an excavator dig a trench across Caledonia’s Argyle Street—right behind my car, actually. That’s the former provincial Highway 6. Yet no one lifted a finger.

Dozens of militants were photographed—I’ve got the photograph on my desk—lifting a van over a bridge guardrail on a Haldimand county road and dropping this van on provincial Highway 6, down below. No one has ever been arrested. I sent everyone in this House a photograph of that happening. No one has been arrested.

A railway bridge and a transformer station were torched, as we know. Highways and railways were blockaded, as we know. Police vehicles have been carjacked and subdivisions halted and occupied up and down the river, especially in Brantford, all seemingly without your government’s permission.

These are but visual symbols of the chaos and the intimidation that has been permitted. Some feel that the present stalemate over what has been deemed an invalid land claim is preferable to what went on before. However, bigger issues are at stake. I know that the member for Welland made reference to some of these things. Tolerance of criminal activity, including the illegal tobacco trade, has bred a mistrust, a loss of confidence in police, courts and government. I’m the area MPP; I’ve

received four and a half years of letters, emails, phone calls, and thousands of names on a petition calling for an inquiry into policing.

Caledonia has raised serious questions about this government's adherence to the rule of law. In a free and democratic society, we have one law for all. We in the opposition have said many times that no one is beneath the law, no one is above the law, and no one is beyond the law. The way in which we interpret and enforce our laws is fundamental to our democratic way of life. We do have government for a reason: at minimum, to ensure justice, to ensure the rule of law and the democratic process. The credibility of this government is lost, and government policy is doomed to fail, when the law and democratic processes are sabotaged.

When democratic processes are sabotaged, the result, as you would know, is invariably not good. When lawlessness is witnessed and permitted, it gets worse. People should be arrested when they break the law, regardless of who they are.

For these and other reasons, we in Ontario's opposition have now three times called for a public inquiry. We did it first in June 2006 after the OPP raid; second, with a private member's bill I put forward, the Truth about Caledonia Act; and presently with Attorney General critic Ted Chudleigh's Public Inquiry into Caledonia Act. All proposals were designed to discover the truth about the provincial role in this ongoing dispute at Douglas Creek Estates.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Halton has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I find it passing strange that the Liberals criticize the drafting of the bill. This bill is based on the inquiry into the Ipperwash affair. If there's a problem in the drafting, it's based on the Liberal drafting, so I find it strange that they criticize the drafting when in fact it was basically their bill.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, they flip-flopped on it.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: They flip-flopped on it. They backtracked, which is, unfortunately, very typical of this government.

The people of Caledonia, both the First Nations and the residents of Caledonia, deserve better. They deserve better than this. They live in Ontario. They used to live in what was a safe and prosperous community.

The Chartwell-Brown suit—they were only one couple of many, many couples. There are approximately 7,000 people who live in Caledonia. Brantford has been affected. Haldimand county has been affected. There are probably 75,000 people or so who live in that area who are affected by this dispute. It's happening in Ontario, and they deserve better.

The class-action suit that is proceeding through the legal channels is also going to have a huge impact on the results of Caledonia and could influence the way this government has to react.

Businesses have suffered, home values have gone down and people's rights have been abrogated. Fairness

has not been what the people of Caledonia and the First Nations of Caledonia have experienced from the government's actions in this case.

It's time for fairness to predominate. It's time for the government to take action in this area. Please support this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has expired. We'll vote on Mr. Chudleigh's bill in about 100 minutes.

WORLD WATER DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA JOURNÉE MONDIALE DE L'EAU

Mr. Kular moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to proclaim World Water Day in Ontario / Projet de loi 105, Loi proclamant la Journée mondiale de l'eau en Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Kuldip Kular: Water makes up to 75% of the human body. We can survive for four weeks without food but not more than three days without water. Water helps to control the balance of each and every one of our cells. Very simply, no one can survive without water.

Water levels all over the world are declining every day. In the next 15 years, the world will lose a significant percentage of our accessible water. Water will become the gold standard in the future, and we will trade it like gold.

The UN estimates that one billion people throughout the world lack access to clean water. As much as 50% of the world's population will live in water-scarce areas by 2025, and over the next 20 years, demand for water around the world will exceed the current supply by 40%. Countries with an abundance of water will be rich. However, people living in countries without much water will have a hard time surviving. Water deserves our respect; without it we will die.

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Bill 105 is An Act to proclaim World Water Day in Ontario. Each year on March 22, the United Nations, governments and non-government organizations celebrate World Water Day and a specific theme. Next year, World Water Day will be a vehicle to explore issues about water management, especially in urban and industrialized societies such as ours. It will create a dialogue between governments, municipalities, stakeholders and individuals about the overuse of water. In Ontario, World Water Day could be an opportunity to explore not only global water issues, but also the issues that impact us right here in Ontario.

Since Confederation, the management of water has largely been a provincial responsibility, and this responsibility was meant to be managed for the common good. I believe it's important that our province do everything it can to promote awareness about water issues as they

impact Ontarians. Our society must be aware of water issues in Ontario in order to protect human health and the natural environment, now and in the future.

According to United Nations stats, only 2.5% of our world's total water supply is fresh water. Of that 2.5%, around 30% is hidden from our sight; that means it's underground. The vast majority, roughly 70%, is stored in snow and ice, and the remainder is held in the atmosphere. Despite these stats, just 1% of the world's total fresh water supply is accessible. This 1% must supply over six billion human lives and their activities. Millions of Ontarians rely upon fresh water every day. They use fresh water in agriculture, commercial fishing, power generation, trade, industry, tourism, transportation and at home.

Historically, the first residents of Ontario, the aboriginals, used our lakes, rivers and streams to live and travel. Later on, immigrants from Europe and other parts of the world settled around waterways to farm, trade and build Ontario's first industries. Eventually, Ontario tapped some of these waterways to produce hydroelectricity, which even today accounts for 22% of power generation in this province. This hydroelectricity transformed Ontario into an industrial society and is one of the catalysts to our modern success.

Our reliance on water must be responsibly managed. We learned this through the tragic Walkerton incident, when thousands of Ontarians became ill with water-borne bacteria through the overuse and contamination of the local water source.

To be frank, our reliance on water has not changed since historic times. In fact, it's estimated that Canadians use twice as much water as people in Germany or in the United Kingdom. What we know today about the limits of fresh water should change the way Ontarians think about this resource. We now know that 20% of accessible fresh water in the world is found right here in this province. Given the water shortages experienced in many parts of the world, affecting hundreds of millions of people, that places Ontario in an enviable light. To be frank, many Ontarians, given our busy urban lifestyles, forget that water is required to grow the food we bring to our dinner tables; that water is required to power our lights, our televisions and our computers; and that ships bring from foreign ports the many goods we buy to improve our lifestyles.

As the world's population grows, and as Ontario's population grows, we must look to the future of fresh water and how we manage it. This year's theme, urban water management, is directly relevant to Ontario. It challenges us to be more aware of how we use our water and what we can do to conserve it. It's true that more time, energy and money are required to restore water quality than to conserve it. Fortunately, Ontario has been hard at work, at many levels, to do just this.

Already, Ontario is home to more than 22,000 people employed in the clean water technologies sector. Ontarians are leaders in our green economy, the economy we need to grow in order to protect the natural health and

prosperity of our society. We also need to grow this sector in order to tap into the \$400-billion world market for clean water technologies—of which Ontario can have a good share. That's why we have introduced the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, to help Ontario break into the global market for clean water technologies, because we want to export Ontario's technologies and not our water resources.

We have passed the Lake Simcoe Protection Act to revitalize communities along the shores of this lake and to restore the natural environment. We passed the Water Resources Act in 2007 to ban the bulk export of water from the Great Lakes. We have passed the cosmetic pesticides ban to prevent harmful chemicals from leeching into our soil and our groundwater. We are also investing in our water infrastructure to ensure that we lose less water through aging pipes and water mains as it is brought from pumping stations to our homes and businesses.

Ontarians deserve to hear of these things, and celebrating World Water Day would be an appropriate time. Importantly, Bill 105, if passed, would also help to create a greater awareness among Ontarians of water issues in our province as we continue to urbanize and industrialize. We want the future we strive for and deserve. World Water Day would help to mould the message for educators and public officials for greater conservation in our way of life at home, at school and at work, on our farms, in our factories and institutions, helping people to understand how they can make a difference in their lives and for the common good.

We must create a culture of conservation. This is not an unattainable goal but rather a great opportunity. While we have far to go, the journey has begun. The journey is an investment of time, energy and resources in our future and in the future of our children. It means avoiding costly efforts to restore the more than 250,000 lakes, countless rivers and streams of our beautiful province. It can also mean protecting human life from tragedies, such as Walkerton.

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We can do this if Ontarians understand the challenge at hand. I believe Bill 105, in proclaiming World Water Day in Ontario, can help us achieve the level of awareness we need to keep Ontario the best place in which to live, work and raise a family and to restore its prosperity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's an honour to speak on this bill, which is, of course, An Act to proclaim World Water Day in Ontario.

I want to thank my colleague the member from Haldimand–Norfolk for agreeing to share his time with me. I also want to congratulate my colleague the honourable member from Haldimand–Norfolk for the excellent leadership he has been showing on the environmental file. My colleague, I know, is going to make some very salient points regarding this bill, and I just want to take a

very few minutes to provide some additional commentary to what I know will be his very constructive remarks.

I'd like to begin by just reminding and putting on the record the fact that our PC caucus has always shown an outstanding commitment to the protection of our natural environment. It's always been a priority. In fact, if you take a look at all of the accomplishments, you might say that we have a legacy of progressive and prudent environmental policy.

Specifically with regard to water safety, I was pleased to have been appointed Minister of the Environment when the O'Connor report was released, and pleased to have been in a position to embark upon a plan to ensure that every single one of those recommendations would be implemented.

Also, we hear a lot about coal and we hear about the fact that the government continues to push back the date for the closing of the coal plants. I believe now it's maybe 2014, but I think it's important to remember that it was our party that did sign the regulation—in fact, I was Minister of the Environment—to close the Lakeview coal plant. As you know, that coal plant is now closed and the rest of the coal plants that the government has promised to close—although they are saying it's going to be 2014; they had to push it back from 2007. I would suggest to you that having formulated the plan for the closure of the Lakeview coal plant and signing the regulation, it would be difficult to do, because the government hasn't shown yet that they have a plan and it takes a long time to close a coal plant. Again, we certainly have a record as being the only government to sign a regulation to close a coal plant.

I'd also like to remind the House that it was our government that put forward the sustainable water and sewage act eight years before the member from Don Valley East did. We also introduced the Safe Drinking Water Act.

I think it's clear that for the Progressive Conservative Party in the province of Ontario, clean water and water conservation have always been priorities. Moreover, our party was solely responsible for Ontario's Living Legacy initiative. As you know, this conservation strategy resulted in the single largest expansion of parks and protected areas in the history of this province.

That brings me to this bill. Obviously, this bill will help to raise the awareness, and I trust that, at the same time, it will act as a reminder to the government to address some of the issues that were raised by the Environmental Commissioner in his recent report, where he pointed out that hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who live along the shores of our lakes and rivers have problems and that there are some issues that need to be addressed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always an honour to rise in this House and really speak for my constituents and those others in Ontario who count on our voices here in the opposition.

Of course we're going to support this bill. It's motherhood and apple pie. Who wouldn't support World Water Day? Hey, it even sounds nice. I commend the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for bringing it forward. Hopefully it will increase awareness.

Part of the awareness that we in the New Democratic Party hope it increases is awareness of how little the McGuinty government has done on this file. In fact, you need go no further than the Environmental Commissioner himself. He's no wild-eyed Marxist, I'm sure. He's pretty liberal, either with a big L or a small L, and he's come out with an incredibly damning report about this government's inaction on the water file.

You've heard the member from Kitchener–Waterloo talk about their lack of action on coal-fired plants. That is a tragedy whose effects are felt across Canada, not just in Ontario. First of all, they promised to close them in 2007. Now it's 2014, conveniently after the next election. Meanwhile, we rush headlong into expensive nuclear energy, whose cost overruns I know Ontarians are feeling right now on their hydro bills as a pinch—not to mention with the added HST.

This summer I had some time to explore the rivers and the waters of southern Ontario—we were at a couple of friends' cottages, very close to the lake, very close to Lake Ontario—and experience what the water quality in this province is like. I have to say here, in terms of Lake Ontario, the city of Toronto has been doing what it can with very little resource and with very little help from the McGuinty government here at Queen's Park. Some of our beaches are cleaner, in a sense, than they've been in a long time, but the water itself—let me give you a personal story about the quality of the water itself, not only in Lake Ontario but in our lakes in southern Ontario, many of which are used by cottagers for swimming and recreation; where children swim, for heaven's sake.

I have a beloved dog. Some of you who know me know that. Her name is Victoria. She's a bull terrier. She doesn't fit under the government's definition of pit bull only because probably Don Cherry owns one too—might, I mean. Hopefully they won't take her away now. Anyway, Victoria loves to swim. She should be a retriever, but she's not; she's a bull terrier. She loves to swim. So she swam in Lake Ontario, as she does routinely, this summer. She swam in a number of other lakes that will go unmentioned, in cottage country. And guess what happened to Victoria? She's a short-haired dog. She developed a rash. I asked other cottagers, "What is it called?" "River rash," they said. "All the dogs get it that swim in this lake or that lake." Certainly all the dogs get it that swim in Lake Ontario for any length of time. What is a river rash? Well, it's very painful and itchy welts that develop all over the dog. I took her to the veterinarian, and they said it was an allergic reaction, to pollutants in the water, no doubt. They prescribed Benadryl—who knew? Benadryl cures dogs as well as people. Surely, it worked. I thought, "Good grief, this is a dog. Think of the children who are swimming here." Would I let my children swim there? I don't know. After this experience this summer, I'm not so sure.

Let's hear what Gord Miller says about the condition of water under the McGuinty government's watch in Ontario. He said there are two major areas of failure, and the first is municipal waste water discharges that are adding to the pollution of the Great Lakes. Municipal waste water systems are worsening, he warned in his 2009-10 annual report. He said it was mainly due to rapidly growing population, but he also points out that we could be doing way more than we do. The Ontario sides of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario have been found to be poor and deteriorating, like my dog experienced.

He said that, contrasted with Ontario, the Americans on the other side of the border have been able to accomplish remarkable cleanups of their lakes and rivers by strengthening their Clean Water Act and setting clear standards for municipal waste water. Not here though, says Mr. Miller, Environmental Commissioner. Here, water quality is deteriorating at the same time as the burgeoning population growth, and this is due to the increased effluent loadings.

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He calls for action. He says that the Ministry of the Environment and the McGuinty government seem to be stuck in neutral. He says it could slow down, if it had the political will, or even stop the steadily worsening pollution loads by phasing in tighter effluent limits. He says these effluent guidelines have not been changed in decades, and this government has done nothing to change that, particularly, he points out, for Lake Erie and Lake Ontario.

He does point out that one municipality is doing a better-than-average job. That was Guelph, so it would be remiss of me not to mention that. But he says that, by and large, the Ministry of the Environment is MIA—missing in action.

The second point he makes is the failure to monitor and act on old landfills, which puts our groundwater at risk. Our groundwater—it doesn't get more basic than that. He says that the Ministry of the Environment "has lost track of hundreds of aging landfills that threaten Ontario's water and air quality." He says, in the same report, "Without proper protective measures and monitoring, aging landfills can pose a serious risk to the environment. Pollutants can enter ground and surface waters; decomposition produces noxious odours and greenhouse gases ... aging landfills are not adequately inventoried or regularly inspected, and their approvals are not being updated by the province," by the McGuinty government.

He goes on to point out, and people will know, that there are 2,449 landfills in Ontario but only 1%, or 21 landfills, are subject to the more stringent 1998 requirements of the Environmental Protection Act. The ministry only inspects 11% of landfill sites annually. The low inspection rate, he points out, increases the likelihood that contaminated water is seeping from older landfills undetected. More than 1,000 historic landfills, he goes on to say, are estimated to have closed before the ministry itself was created. These old dumps, therefore, are subject to even less scrutiny, if any, by the Ministry of the Environment.

This is frightening stuff. This is scary stuff. This affects the water in our province. So my hope is that on World Water Day—if this bill is passed and goes into law at some point—we reflect on how bad, how absolutely remiss the McGuinty government has been in protecting this incredibly valuable, necessary, important resource right here.

The bill before us, just to get back to it—private member's Bill 105, the World Water Day Act, from the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton—is a noble effort with noble intent but clearly without the backing of his very own government or his own cabinet because they're asleep at the switch on this file. They're not doing anything to recognize that water is a valuable asset. In fact, they're disregarding it, according to the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario. This is his report. By the way, those who are watching at home, who care about their environment, who care about water quality, should order this. They should look it up and they should read his recommendations and his scathing critique of the Ministry of the Environment and what they haven't done and what they should be doing. It's there; it's black and white. This is your government, I'm afraid, member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, and their sorry inaction on this file.

I hope that part of the intent of the member when he brought forward this bill was to wake up his own cabinet and to say, "Come on, guys and women. Do something. Do something, Environment Minister." Do something about the quality of water because your own Environmental Commissioner of Ontario says you're doing a terrible job. Tell them, please, that my dog got a rash; I'll send the vet bills. Tell them we're concerned about the state of health of our children and our grandchildren and ourselves when we swim in the lakes. Tell them that municipalities need their help, because they certainly don't have the resources to do the job. They count on this government stepping up and doing something.

Like so much under McGuinty's watch, this has been an issue that has gone unwatched. It's something, as the member eloquently pointed out, we cannot do without, not even for a few hours. Please, if anything, I would love to hear—it's sad, really, that we won't hear from the Minister of the Environment, but hopefully we'll hear from someone from the government's side who will tell us what their reaction is to the Environmental Commissioner's report, what they intend to do about it and how they intend to protect the good citizens of Ontario and their water supply, because they're not doing it right now. We're talking groundwater here. We're talking the very substance of life in this province. We should be very frightened. We should be frightened indeed, after reading that report, and we should be called to action. If it takes a World Water Day to wake up this government, maybe that is what we need.

Certainly we'll be voting for this bill. Why not? As I said at the outset, this is a no-brainer. It's motherhood; it's apple pie. But I hope the intent of it is to wake up his own cabinet to answer the charges of neglect that came

out of Mr. Miller's eloquent and well-researched report and do something so that we could all drink water with safety, we could all swim in our lakes and not come out with "river rashes," that we could all count on the groundwater, the very stuff of life, being clean and pure not only for us but for future generations.

Wake up, Ministry of the Environment, Minister of the Environment. "Wake up," I hope the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton is saying. Wake up and do your job. The people of Ontario are counting on you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon. I think the piece of legislation being brought forward by the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton is, as usual, a very practical bill, one that I think is worthy of the support of all members of this House. Despite the previous comments, I think the issue of world water goes far beyond partisan politics. If you look back over the history of this province, our knowledge of the degradation that we've all inflicted on the environment has received more attention and more appreciation.

I can go back to the early 1990s, during the reign of the NDP. I don't think you could swim in Lake Ontario then. I don't think the quality of water in this province was any better then. I don't think anything was being done about the rapid urbanization. The increase in effluent was the same.

I was on council, dealing with that government. We were saying that our towns and our cities were under pressure.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Are you talking about Bob Rae, who's a Liberal?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I think I may have hit a nerve over there.

The rapid urbanization. We went to the government, as a council. I was on the council of the region of Halton, the town of Oakville. We told them we needed some assistance. Absolutely no assistance was forthcoming.

Those of you who have ever travelled in the Third World will know that when you come back to a place like Ontario, you tend to look at water a little differently. When you look at a dripping tap, for example, you don't let that tap drip, because of the value that is placed on water in other jurisdictions in this world.

I think that we've all had a part in abusing the Great Lakes in the past. It's a watershed that is the envy of the world. We have such a large percentage of the world's fresh water that we take it for granted. We use a much higher proportion of that on a personal basis than most, if not all, other countries in the rest of the modern world.

If you take a look at a country like South Africa, for example, which is starting to move ahead, which is coming out of the days of apartheid, which is starting to educate its population, the World Trade Organization will tell you one thing is going to hold that country back, and that's the lack of fresh water, a lack of clean water.

A lot of that technology and a lot of that knowledge resides right here in the province of Ontario, so the Water Opportunities Act, I think, is a way for the province of Ontario to share its expertise with the rest of the world, and this bill, in essence, really celebrates that. I think it's a way of telling us that the health of the natural environment throughout the world—not just in Ontario, not just in Oakville, but throughout the world—is something that everybody understands and appreciates. It drives home the message that water is one of the elements of life. If you have no water, you have no life on this planet. It's that simple.

I think that the bill that's come forward is a well-thought-out bill. It's a very positive bill. It allows the world to celebrate on March 22 the fact that it has started to pay attention to the degradation of the one of the most precious resources on this planet and helps us really focus our attention on that.

I think it's a bill that's worthy of support. I don't believe it's apple pie. I don't think it's a no-brainer. I think it's one of the best private members' bills and one of the most practical private members' bills that I've seen in this House in some time.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Obviously, the availability of water and the protection of water as one of Ontario's most important resources—it is a priority for the PC caucus, and I echo the sentiments of the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, a former Minister of the Environment. There's no question, clean water is essential. It's essential to our health, to the success of our way of life, and to the success and the thriving and prosperity that we hope to see return to Ontario.

Water is an element that is so basic, so essential to individuals, to business, to industry and to our environment, that it does require our protection; it does require our promotion—and one reason was given earlier: Our former government committed to enacting all of the recommendations of Justice O'Connor's Walkerton inquiry.

The issue, environmentalism, is so important, and it's so important to focus and to get results. In 1970, I was teaching environmental science. That was the year that Earth Day was implemented. That's a day that over the decades has kind of maintained its brand; it has maintained its success, its implementation around the world. I am concerned when we in this Legislature—and I've only been here 15 years, but I have seen a plethora of designated days and environmental days. I know the member opposite, very recently, also introduced a motion for Zero Waste Day. We get so many of these days that I'm concerned it waters down the message, if you will, and takes away from some of the really compelling public relations and promotional events like Earth Day.

I also echo sentiments—I think the member for Parkdale-High Park made mention of Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller's very recent report. Again, if this government were to truly understand the importance

of water, why do we see an Environmental Commissioner's report indicating "poor" and "deteriorating" conditions near shore areas and along the beaches of Lake Ontario, Lake Erie down in my neck of the woods, parts of Lake Huron? I know the member for Parkdale-High Park made reference to her dog, Victoria, swimming in a lake and getting a rash from—that was Evangeline Lake, did you say? That's a beautiful name for a lake up, I understand, near Georgian Bay. My concern, as with Lake Ontario: If you can't swim in it, and if your dog can't swim in it, why are we drinking it? Sometimes I really do question that, but that's for somebody with a bit more wisdom than I to understand why we do that.

It seems like yesterday when Earth Day came out in 1970, and with respect to this proposal, it does seem like yesterday—I guess it was last February—that we were debating the points of declaring another environmental day put forward by the member. World Water Day is brought to you by this member who created Zero Waste Day. It's the same member and the same caucus who have brought forward Climate Change Awareness Day, Greenbelt Day—there really is quite a list.

Specifically, as we know, we're being asked to designate March 22 as World Water Day, obviously to recognize the vital importance and the increasing demands on not only Ontario's water but on global water supplies. I think there was mention made of the tremendous increase in population not only in Toronto—we hear about that—but in so much of the world. It goes without saying that these are the kinds of points that—we can all agree on these issues.

However, as I mentioned in this House several months ago, in the last session alone—I mean, how far does this go? We debated Peace Officers' Memorial Day; Tom Longboat Day; Congenital Heart Disease Awareness Day; Greenbelt Day, as I mentioned; Students Against Impaired and Distracted Driving Day. I hope that doesn't take away from the good work that has been accomplished by the anti-drinking and driving movement since the mid 1980s. We debated Stop Human Trafficking Day—these are all very important—St. John Ambulance Day, Mental Health Awareness Day—I think that was the last session. In this session, there's a whole slew of designated days and weeks to debate.

Once again, I don't mean to downplay the importance or the reasons behind this; I just question this as a tactic. I'm just concerned, almost from a communications perspective. There are only so many days in the year, obviously. There are only so many weeks—52, by last count. I am concerned that we're just a little too much of a good thing, and I do wonder when this government might start looking at what it has done to the economy. I hope these kinds of days aren't a diversion or an attempt by government members to garner some green headlines rather than answering some questions being raised by people in Ontario, questions that are being left behind by a government that's addicted to spending.

I get an awful lot more questions being raised with respect to the HST, eco fees—now there's something.

You've taken the word "eco," and you've almost made "sustainability"—you've left a sour taste in people's mouths by taking these words and kind of twisting them around and kind of botching the rollout. In the long run, it really does not help the environmental movement.

I think we'll continue to devote countless hours to debating these names and celebrating these calendar days, but I'm just really concerned about what kind of impact we're really having as we continue to roll these out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It's a privilege and honour, of course, for me to support my fellow physician parliamentary colleague Dr. Kular as he brings forth Bill 105, An Act to proclaim World Water Day in Ontario.

La première Journée mondiale de l'eau a été célébrée en 1993 suivant une résolution adoptée par les Nations Unies en 1992. La journée est célébrée maintenant par les gouvernements à travers le monde entier le 22 mars de chaque année.

La Journée mondiale de l'eau en 2011 cherche à attirer l'attention sur cette question : la croissance rapide de la population urbaine, l'industrialisation et le changement climatique. La Journée mondiale de l'eau abonde dans le même sens que notre gouvernement pour conserver nos ressources d'eau potable et de maintenir sa qualité.

Of course, as a parliamentarian as well as physician, I'm very well aware of the necessity for daily access to clean, potable and healthful, I would say, water. We as doctors are very attuned to things like hydration. We are constantly recommending that people hydrate themselves, and I remind all of us that it's something on the order of six to eight glasses a day. Of course, it can vary with activity and sweating and weather and all the rest of it. But we're very attuned to regulating things like electrolyte balance, sodium and potassium chloride, and of course maintaining water in the right place, meaning within the arterial system and not shifting, as we say, into the third space; say, in the lungs. So, we are well aware of the body balance that's required for water.

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I would commend my physician colleague for attempting to bring forward a more system-wide, province-wide, nationwide idea with regard to balancing our water and, in particular, by bringing attention, focus and media scrutiny not only to what the government is up to in its various initiatives but also, of course, a celebration of the fact that Canada is extraordinarily blessed.

I happened to have been part of a reception with the former President of India just two days ago, and he reminded us all collectively that something in the order of about two billion of people across the planet as of today do not have ready and easy access to fresh drinking water.

A number of mentions were made about the government's particular strategy, and I think it's very important for us all to recognize, and particularly members of the NDP, who do have obviously a legitimate environmental interest, that something in the order of 99.8% of the

drinking water tests from municipal drinking water systems in Ontario have actually met our water standards, more than 600 samples were actually tested from 700 sites across Ontario, and all 52 laboratories that are licensed to perform drinking water standards were in fact inspected. There are something like 19 committees in many different arms of not only the Ministry of the Environment but also throughout the cascade of the bureaucracy here at Queen's Park regulating this particular issue.

Ultimately, it's about a government that is very concerned about the protection, enhancement and maintenance of our fresh water resources. So I can only support my colleague Dr. Kular, the MPP from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, who is, of course, bringing forward Bill 105 to recognize World Water Day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It certainly gives me a great deal of pleasure to support our colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton in introducing Bill 105. It's also a great pleasure to be joining two of my physician colleagues in this House in support of this particular measure.

In my role as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, I've had the pleasure of meeting with a number of stakeholders as we've been moving forward with our Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, and some of the things that I've learned in that process have been extremely instructive and I think point to the need for having the public's awareness drawn to the importance of water.

Ontarians use 260 litres of water per day for residential use, and this is about double the amount they use in many countries of the European Union. One needs to ask oneself, why on earth are we using drinking water, potable water, to flush our toilets? Many different examples of things that, in other jurisdictions, where water conservation is extremely important because of the scarcity of water in those areas, people have taken measures to educate themselves in terms of the need of using potable water—there are things like rain barrels being used to collect water from rooftops to be used for purposes other than drinking.

So, in declaring World Water Day in this way through Bill 105, we're essentially making a culture shift. We're asking Ontarians to think long and hard about the importance of water, a very precious resource. Even here, where we have always taken for granted an abundance of clean water, we are straining our supplies.

Even though we're surrounded by the Great Lakes, the four largest lakes on the planet, they replenish only at a rate of about 1% per year, and they are certainly a very fragile ecosystem. So we need and can do so much more in this regard.

In the time I spent with various stakeholders, certainly Ontario technology is there to help us conserve water. Ontario businesses are exporting their technology to many places in the world where water is scarce. There certainly are business opportunities as well.

Some municipalities certainly have taken a lead in the water conservation concept, and the region of York is no exception. They began, in 1998, the Water for Tomorrow program. This allowed the regional municipality of York to engage citizens in water conservation, particularly around their gardening and how much water you really need to water your lawn; and again, using drinking water. It helped many, many people adjust what they were doing in terms of watering their lawns, even going to the extent of advising on plants that required far less water. There was also a wonderful festival in my riding of Oak Ridges-Markham at Bruce's Mill, where children from schools across the region would come to learn about the importance of water and the need to conserve. As we all know, children will often drive their parents to think far more about some of these important events.

I'm delighted to support World Water Day. I think it's a good step forward. It certainly will showcase our efforts in terms of conservation as a government, and for all citizens to do their part as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Kular, the honourable member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton, has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Kuldip Kular: I want to start by thanking my honourable colleagues from Oak Ridges-Markham, Oakville, Etobicoke North, Parkdale-High Park, Kitchener-Waterloo and Haldimand-Norfolk for speaking on this bill and in this bill's support.

This bill would help improve public awareness of water issues by focusing our attention on a particular day, along with everyone else's in the world, on how much each of our lives is connected to each other's and to the environment. For our efforts to be truly successful, we need more Ontarians to understand how they use water and how their lives are impacted by water.

Protecting our water resources by using less and by keeping them clean benefits public health, the natural environment and our economy. Therefore we, as a legislative body, have a particular duty for the common good. That's why I urge all members on both sides of the House to support this non-partisan bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time allocated for this ballot item has expired. We'll vote on it in about 50 minutes.

MICHELLE KROHN ACT (MODIFIED DRIVER'S LICENCE), 2010

LOI MICHELLE KROHN DE 2010 SUR LES PERMIS DE CONDUIRE MODIFIÉS

Mr. Ramal moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 97, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to create an optional modified driver's licence / Projet de loi 97, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin de créer un permis de conduire modifié facultatif.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to stand up again to speak on the very same issue that I had the chance and privilege to speak about almost a year ago, which is to create an optional driver's licence.

I introduced it the first time in November 2009. I had the privilege and honour to debate it on December 3, 2009, and it was passed back then but, due to prorogation of the House, died on the order paper. I thought it's very important for myself and for many people across the province of Ontario to reintroduce it, and hopefully this time it will get the chance, see the light, and will be implemented and benefit many, many people across this province.

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I spoke about the history behind introducing this bill. I repeat: It was a lady named Michelle Krohn, who I had the privilege and honour to invite last year to be here with her daughter and many others who came from London, Ontario, from CARP and from many different organizations to witness the debate about this very important issue. Today, I believe, she is watching us from her house. I want to dedicate this bill to her.

I wanted to call it—it's a highway traffic act, actually—the Michelle Krohn Highway Traffic Act, because this woman, this individual, worked very hard. She lobbied many people. She called a lot of MPPs in the past to convince them to sponsor and pass it. That lady worked hard in her lifetime. She's now in her senior years, and she wants to have the chance to drive and to commute, to go buy her groceries, to visit her family—which happens to be in a small town next to London—without any problem, without being dependent on other people to drive her back and forth.

A restricted or optional driver's licence is not unique in Canada. Many other provinces already have those options. I will mention a few of them: Quebec, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador and many other jurisdictions in Canada. They had a similar idea, to create an optional driver's licence for people who, for some reason, cannot drive at regular times or cannot go on 400-series highways.

This bill would allow people to commute without any fear, to have a certain time for them to drive in the daytime, not at night, and inside cities and small towns.

As you know, Ontario is a huge province. Even though the majority of people live in the cities, a lot of people live in the countryside, where transit does not exist. Persons living in those areas cannot depend on transit service to give them the chance to go to the grocery store or to see a doctor. Therefore, it's important to have the ability to drive. They can go to the grocery store. They can visit their family. They can buy whatever they want from the mall or see their doctors.

As I mentioned to you, in Newfoundland and Labrador, they have restrictions, a custom-designed driver's licence to meet the needs of people. They have a speed zone, daytime-only and a geographical region; also some special equipment and a special size of car, and many different modifications to allow people to drive and look after themselves.

In the past, when I introduced this bill, I had the privilege and honour to debate it in the House. I know the member opposite of the Conservative Party from Newmarket–Aurora, stood in his place and said, "I will support it fully, but we have some reservations." I was speaking to him yesterday. He was happy, because I listened to his concerns; also, we eliminated the age factor in the bill. Now this bill will involve everyone: seniors, young people, females, males. Any person who cannot drive, for different reasons, will be able to have a restricted driver's licence and have the ability to commute, to visit, to do whatever they want on a daily basis.

I remember that back then the member from Newmarket–Aurora, Mr. Klees, said the age 65 factor wouldn't be good, because it discriminates against people. So in Bill 97, we eliminated the age factor. Also, I listened to the member of the third party from Timmins–James Bay, Mr. Bisson. He mentioned the same thing.

So, today, I'm looking forward to support from all the members of this House. We've eliminated those factors. We've opened it up for everyone. We've opened it up for all the people of the province of Ontario, even though I believe the majority of people who will benefit from this bill are people who have the age factor: the seniors.

I had the chance and the privilege last Sunday to attend a silver anniversary for Over 55 (London). It's a group that deals with seniors, to help seniors to maintain jobs, to find jobs, and also to be able to remain active in the community. Because as you know, the stereotype, when a person is over 55—the employment demand is not so high for them. That's why they created this group: in order to maintain their ability, to maintain their connections and to have the ability to find a job and to maintain the job they have.

I think that the optional driver's licence would help them a lot. Because you know what? For some reason, especially in the countryside, especially in the small, rural areas, if you don't have a car, you cannot drive and you cannot maintain a job, so you cannot have a job. If you don't have a car, you cannot go to the grocery store. If you don't have a car, you cannot see the doctor any time you want. You will be restricted, and your movement will be restricted. So I think that creating this option for many people will give them freedom and the chance to be mobile, to be able to depend on themselves, to be able to do whatever they want on a daily basis. I think it's an important initiative to allow our population to continue to be mobile and to depend on themselves, especially if they have the mental capacity and the physical capacity to do so.

I was talking to a few people the other day, and they are in a well condition. They can see very well, physically they are strong, but for some reason they don't like to drive on the highway, especially the 401. I know that many of us use Highway 401 on a regular basis, and many people are afraid when they go on the 400 highways, because they see lots of trucks, lots of cars, lots of traffic. If you are not a good driver, you have the fear

from other people around you. So why not give a chance to those people who don't want to drive on the highways like the 400-series highways to be able to drive within the cities and within the towns, with certain conditions? Also, some people don't like to drive in the wintertime because there's lots of snow falling on the ground, and it creates slippery conditions; some people are scared to drive. We have to give them that chance.

As I mentioned also, some people with diabetes and some kinds of vision issues don't like to drive at nighttime. They should have the option to drive during the daytime if they don't want to drive at nighttime. It's good for them, and it's good for other people driving on the road. It's safe for the people who drive under certain conditions and also good for other people who are driving on a regular basis. They don't want to be hit or have accidents with the people who are not comfortable to drive in certain conditions or at a certain time of day or on certain highways.

I spoke with CARP, I spoke with the Minister of Transportation, I spoke with Over 55 and many different seniors groups in the province of Ontario, and many people believe they should have the freedom and the ability to choose where they can drive, when they can drive, and certain conditions.

I'm looking forward this time, after modifying the bill, to getting support from both sides of the House. As I mentioned and will repeat again, the member from the Conservative Party spoke in support, but they have some kind of reservation in terms of age limit, and the member from the NDP raised the same concern. This time, we went back and we did more research, we talked to more people and we got advice from all the people concerned about this issue. We came out with a new version, and hopefully this new version will help everyone and give them the chance to support it.

Before I finish, I want to continue to thank Michelle Krohn for her advocacy and for her hard work to convince many seniors' groups to support this bill. I wish she'd had the chance to come and listen to our debate today, because I believe she'll be happy. She worked for a long, long time with many different people in the city of London and in the province of Ontario to see such a bill exist, to give her the chance again to be able to drive, to be able to commute, to be able to visit her daughter and her friends, and to be able to go to the grocery store and to see her doctor without depending on other people.

So many people in this province feel pride, and feel that they want to maintain their freedom, and freedom these days, especially in the small towns and cities, cannot be achieved without the ability to drive from point A to point B. Those people still believe that they are strong enough to do the work by themselves without being dependents, but they want that extra push to give them the chance to do so.

1520

At the present time, according to the Highway Traffic Act, you obtain a driver's licence for a certain time and then after that you have to enter the test to do the

highway. If you fail on the highway, you lose the first G test. I think it's not fair for some people who choose not to drive on the highway.

Hopefully, if we pass this bill, and hopefully, when this bill goes to committee, it will be supported by both sides of the House and also by the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Speaker, I will thank you very much and also thank all the people and all the members of this House, whatever the speakers support or speak against. Hopefully we can move forward to see some kind of implementation and some kind of progress to help our communities, our people and especially our seniors in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm so pleased to be able to speak to Bill 97, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to create an optional modified driver's licence, presented by the member for London–Fanshawe. He talked about the fact that this bill had been previously introduced. As was mentioned, it was presented. In fact, second reading debate took place in December 2009. At the time the bill was called Bill 221, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to create an optional conditional driver's licence for seniors, and I think that was the point that the member for London–Fanshawe talked about.

He talked about this word. He mentioned the fact that the Legislature prorogued and this bill died on the order paper. You know, when I first started as a staffer here and I would use that word, no one would know what I was talking about, but now everybody knows. When someone uses the word that Parliament or the Legislature prorogues, everyone knows because of what happened with our federal colleagues. But you know, this is a good thing. The fact that the Legislature prorogued was a good thing here. Although this bill died, it allowed the member for London–Fanshawe to take into consideration some of the comments that were made by the opposition parties, and I commend Mr. Ramal for doing that.

He mentioned the member for Newmarket–Aurora, Mr. Klees, who is himself our transportation critic and also a former Minister of Transportation. I know he would have loved to be here, and I'm glad that both of you did have the opportunity to chat yesterday. I certainly admire Mr. Klees. He's my mother-in-law's MPP. Freda Roberts, my mother-in-law, lives up in Newmarket. Freda's a big fan of Mr. Klees, and she wouldn't want me to speak badly of him. I think she's proud that I can speak on his behalf today, to some degree, when he thanks you for mentioning him earlier and the fact that this bill was changed because there were some issues with Bill 221, the fact that it was an age-specific condition. I think you mentioned Mr. Bisson as well, who spoke about the discriminatory nature. So I'm glad that this bill is back here today for second reading, and I'm glad that I can speak in favour of this bill's introduction for second reading.

I've spoken to a number of constituents, and one of the issues that the member for London–Fanshawe talked

about was 400-series highways. I can remember speaking to one of my Leeds–Grenville constituents, and she had great anxiety because she had to go through her driver's test and had to go on the 401. She hadn't driven that highway for a number of years, and she called the constituency office expressing concern: Was there a way that we could get that section exempt from her driver's licence? In fact, I found out later that she hired a driving instructor because it was that much of an anxiety for her, the fact that she had not—that wasn't in her comfort zone. She had used her car in recent years to do exactly what the member for London–Fanshawe talked about: It was a vehicle for her to get her groceries, to go to doctor's appointments or to church or to visit her family, and a 400-series highway just wasn't in the cards. She used a county road or a city or township road. It just wasn't in her repertoire to bomb out on the 401 and take an appointment.

That constituent and the one you spoke of, who was the drive for this bill—I think it's very important that we provide that flexibility. As well, I think back to when Bill 221 was introduced and the issue of night vision, the fact that it wasn't just a problem that people over 65 had. The bill or the legislation should be flexible so that it would deal with that. I think the member for London–Fanshawe has addressed that.

The one thing that I think was discussed back in December 2009, on the previous bill, and I think bears mention today—from my perspective, we, as MPPs, have a number of our constituents call us when their licence has been pulled by a medical doctor, whether it be for a seizure or an accident or some other medical condition. That whole process that we deal with as MPPs and our constituency staff deal with is a tremendous cause of anxiety for our constituents. It's a rather long and cumbersome process. Many of them feel that it causes far too much disruption because by the time that the actual suspension is given, the medical doctor who has pulled the licence has given the medical clearance to get it back. It's a real difficulty. I've dealt with hundreds of these cases over the years at the Leeds–Grenville constituency office level.

I hope that parties are going to support this today and that it moves forward past second reading; that there are some hearings that the Minister of Transportation looks at, not just with this bill but that whole medical process because, from my perspective, we deal with this on a weekly basis and it does need to be looked at by all.

From my perspective, I'm very pleased to support this legislation because, again, it takes away the age-specific reference that the previous bill had. Obviously, my colleagues and I support providing mobility to Ontarians. We appreciate the clauses the member for London–Fanshawe has added to this bill to be flexible in different cases for reasons not to drive, whether it be the 400-series highways or other additions that the modified licence would have.

I believe that it would be wise for us to look at other areas. I know that we just had the Canada 55+ Games in

my community of Leeds–Grenville. We had people from all over Canada attend. It's funny, that when 55-plus folks get together—and these athletes spent a lot of time together; there was a lot of social interaction. It wasn't just competing in their particular sport. There was a lot of social time, a lot of downtime when they could interact. It's amazing the discussions that the groups have regarding driving in provinces. I spent some time in the athletes' village when they hosted the Canada 55+ Games in August. There was a lot of discussion about different legislation and what different provinces do for drivers. As well, being a border community, we have our seniors compare what takes place in New York state with what takes place in Ontario.

There's a lot of variation that takes place and I'm glad the member for London–Fanshawe mentioned that other provinces provide this optional modified driver's licence. As we have the discussion this afternoon, I'm hoping, as does the member for London–Fanshawe, that we will get some support and we'll be able to move forward. I am pleased that he and the member for Newmarket–Aurora spoke yesterday about it because I know he was very pleased with some of the things that were talked about last December, some of the issues. Some of his concerns were accommodated, that we have some flexibility in today's legislation.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm pleased to rise in support of our colleague from London–Fanshawe's Bill 97. Certainly we've heard some good support from our colleagues from the PC Party.

I was able to find a reference which also very much supports this in the Canadian Medical Association Journal. The findings are that, in fact, drivers with restricted licences have lower traffic violation rates than those without restrictions and that at-fault crash rates decreased after the introduction of restricted or conditional licensing.

As has been mentioned, there is experience now with many other provinces, and there's an accommodation. We are all going to age. We are all going to, at some point, find our faculties gradually diminishing.

I'm particularly interested in this topic because my own father, who was mentally in excellent shape at the age of 86, went to renew his driver's licence. He passed his written test with flying colours—I think with 100%, he told us—and all of a sudden we realized that this meant that he was going to be driving for another two years, to the age of 88. My son was living with him at the time, and he took me aside and he said, "Mom, do you realize that grandpa visits his friends in Scarborough in the evening very regularly using the 401?" My son was extremely concerned because he could see that my father's eyesight at night wasn't really what it should be. He was worried about his reaction time, so the thought of him speeding along the 401 was of concern.

I decided actually to phone the family doctor and suggest that she perhaps have a chat with my father about

some very sensible limitations on his driving—in fact, specifically suggesting, “Do not drive at night. Do not drive on the 401 series.” Well, my father somehow interpreted that she was going to say that he needed to take a highway driving test, and he got very nervous and very, very upset. He really just, as our colleague from Leeds–Grenville said, went into a state of complete shock and paralysis, and he decided he should stop driving completely, which meant that he had a very difficult situation.

He was living on his own—well, with my son being there part time, but basically he was responsible for his shopping. What he decided to do, when he decided he shouldn't drive at all, was start walking. He decided to go along the icy sidewalks all the way to all the shops—the LCBO was one his stopping-off spots as well—and he fell. He fell on the ice. Luckily, there were no broken bones but, again, then he became extremely nervous, even about going out and doing the shopping. It was a really sad situation.

If there had been a restricted-licence situation, I think he could have been very easily accommodated. He could have continued to drive to the stores. He would have felt independent, and we would have been quite confident that he was well able—he had lived in that neighbourhood for 40 years. He could find his way to the shops very, very easily and very safely, and it would have preserved his dignity. It was a very sad time for him.

I commend the member again for bringing this forward. I think it will be very important for seniors to see this legislation passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mario Sergio: It's always a privilege and an honour to rise in the House and contribute to the debate at hand, and my remarks will be in support of the bill.

As the mover, Mr. Ramal, mentioned at the beginning, this is the second time that he has introduced this particular bill. Indeed, it would be very nice to see the bill travelling with a committee and getting more input on the issue from various stakeholders.

The bill itself does not call for either seniors or anybody else to get this special modified licence; I think this applies to anyone with restrictions to their driver's licence. The intent of the bill is especially to assist those who have had some difficulties in getting what we would call a standard licence. As the mover of the bill was saying, this would go a long way in helping those people, and especially seniors, to move around, get out of the house, do some chores, shop and be a bit more mobile.

It doesn't take a brain to say that if you abandon yourself, if you let yourself go, you tend to become more irascible, more lonely; you perhaps get sick more easily, and of course, then there are consequences as well. I think the bill has very good merit, not only to move forward, but to give attention and say yes, I think we should allow those people who may be older or have whatever condition, but who are in a condition where they may drive locally in the neighbourhood, to go and

buy the newspaper or milk, or just go for a ride in the daytime. We are not talking highway driving. We are not talking evening hours. We are talking daytime, on local roads.

I can tell you that I have seniors in my area who, every morning, five days a week, jump into the car—three or four of them—and they drive all the way to the mall up at Jane and Rutherford, Vaughan Mills, solely to go and walk around inside the mall four or five times. Doing that is very healthful. It brings them together, they socialize, they get some good exercise, they stop, they get a coffee, and then they chitchat. They talk about politics or whatever, and then they go home. It's wonderful to see them socializing two or three hours a day, four or five days a week. Then they can go home, and in the meantime, they may drive by the milk store and do some other chores as well.

So I think it has very good merit and saying that, there are conditions attached to it. As a matter of fact, the bill calls for identification stickers or some other way so they know that this is a licence with a condition.

I would say to the House, let's move it along. Let's approve second reading, and let's give the mover of the motion the opportunity to see the bill go to various communities and hear the various stakeholders.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I have no problem supporting the bill. I think it makes some reasonable sense to take this bill on to committee and look at it in a proactive way. But I have to tell you, there are some cases floating around the province right now—I just had a case in my riding this week—about some of the problems we have in the licensing system.

It's easy to bring new laws and new rules and new private members' bills forward, but if we can't fix the system we've got, then we've got a problem adding new legislation to it. I want to explain what it is.

A gentleman called me who has been working with my constituency office in Orillia over the last two or three weeks. This gentleman has a job opportunity for a young lady who has been on social assistance in the past, a single mom with three little kids. She didn't realize that her licence had been suspended because her former boyfriend had a bunch of charges and he hadn't paid them. They took her licence away, so as a result of that, she was driving around for a year without knowing and even was pulled over one time in a RIDE program for a check, and the police didn't check her; they just asked her about it. They checked her licence, but didn't realize that it had been suspended. Now, when she goes back to get her licence, she finds out that she's going to have to start with a G1 and G2. It will be over a year before she can have a driver's licence, and she's been driving all along; everything's perfectly fine with her driving.

1540

She has no criminal convictions or anything like that. It was her former boyfriend who caused the problems. She talked to the MTO; she talked to the minister's

office. They said, "Nope, those are the rules. That's the way it's going to be." As a result of that, this young lady cannot get a driver's licence, will not be able to have this job and will be back on social assistance. That's what I call a problem. I'm trying to reach people in the MTO—and if anybody would call my office, I would really appreciate it, because, I can tell you, these types of things are unacceptable. This should be fixed. This should be from the minister's office or from the director level at some point, so that people who are worthy of driving, who have not had any problems in the past, shouldn't have to go through this long process to get their licence back, when it has been suspended, when they have not really done anything wrong. It's the red tape and the bureaucracy that are causing this to be a problem.

I know I give this specific story, but what I'm saying it for is that it's nice to pass this new legislation, but let's fix the system we currently have before we add a lot of other details and complex legislation to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I wish to speak to this bill, but first I wish to commend the member from London—Fanshawe for bringing this forward again. I wish he didn't have to.

I want to start by saying that this is another example where Ontario can do better on private members' bills. If one was a member of the House of Commons in Ottawa and brought forward a private member's bill, and if that bill were not dealt with within the session and if the Parliament prorogued, those bills, every single one of them, would be protected. They don't die on the order paper; they don't have to be reintroduced. What dies on the order paper in Ottawa are government bills, because the government and the government alone has the authority to prorogue or not prorogue, and they have to determine whether or not they want to reintroduce their bills, and have every opportunity to do so should they prorogue Parliament. The private members' bills are protected so that they continue to go through the system and, if they're successful, can become law. I would suggest that we, as a Legislature, need to look at that ourselves. We need in the future to have the foresight to protect private members' bills so that they don't have to be introduced and reintroduced and reintroduced again.

I go back to last week. There were three private members' bills that were up for debate. One was on its fourth go-round, one was on its third go-round and the third one was on its third go-round as well. That was a total of 10 times that members were standing up, trying to get a private member's bill through. In each and every one of those three cases, as in this, it passed easily in the House and ought to have gone to committee. I am suggesting that if we can protect those private members' bills during the life of a Parliament and if government, particularly the government party, can see fit to allow them to proceed through the committee process, to see whether or not there's community support, to see whether there's government support, to see whether there's

bureaucratic support, then perhaps maybe some of them can find their way into the force of law, because all too often, private members' bills are good for this House in terms of the debate and the bringing out of new ideas, but they never reach that final level of becoming law. I believe this bill should.

I'm standing here in support of this bill, the same as my colleague Mr. Bisson, who spoke on the last occasion, stood in support of this bill. He had some concerns. The member has addressed those concerns, but I'm equally sure that those concerns would have been addressed in committee in any event. I'm positive that by listening to what were perceived to be some of the shortfalls, the committee would have made the necessary amendments. But I commend my friend for having the foresight and looking ahead for today, seeing what those were and making them himself.

I do look at the bill and I do look at people who would benefit from this bill. It has been said already but I think it bears some repetition to say that people who live in small-town, rural and isolated Ontario don't have the same opportunities nor do they have the same problems as a driver would have in urbanized Canada, particularly those who live in the GTA, around this area, or in Ottawa, London or the larger cities.

I'm saying that because if you have an opportunity, as I do, to drive around Ontario—and I'm sure all members have driven around Ontario—you can tell the fundamental difference between driving in downtown Toronto at any hour of the day and driving on a rural road in Essex county, just to pick that one out of the hat. You can tell the fundamental difference in terms of the number of cars. You can tell the speed at which people drive. You can tell that in rural and small-town Ontario, on country roads, people obey all of the speed limits and all of the signs that you're not going to see here in this city. You won't see people racing to get through lights, cutting people off to change lanes and a thousand other things that are everyday happenstance if you drive in this great city.

I would be very nervous of having people who are not used to driving in urban Ontario suddenly coming here with a driver's licence and trying it out. Whether they were 20, 40, 60, 80 or 100 years old, I would be very nervous of them coming here for the first time and trying to drive in this city or on the 400-series highways around this city. Once you get outside of Toronto, once you get to the west past Milton or to the east past Bowmanville, driving on the 401 is not that difficult. I don't find it any more difficult driving on the 401 or the 404 once you get north of about Richmond Hill than driving on any other road. But I will tell you, and I think it bears saying, that if you're going to drive where the traffic is congested, where it goes from eight lanes down to four, where you've got collector lanes cutting in, where you've got commuting traffic of 100,000 cars in an hour zooming along and changing lanes and trying to jockey to get ahead of the next guy, it is very dangerous, and people ought not to drive there unless they feel safe.

You also have the problem in rural Ontario that there is a real paucity of opportunity to take public transit or even taxis. My wife and I have a summer home in a little town called Amherstburg; there is one taxi. There is one. If you need to go up to Windsor to catch the train or something and if you can get the guy, then good luck to you. You usually have to phone a day in advance to make such a long trip, which is some 30 kilometres. You just can't go out on to the street and hail one. If you did, you'd be standing there for days until he might be driving by. There are no buses, there are no streetcars and of course there's no subway, and if people want to get around, they have virtually no opportunity other than to drive their cars.

I like this bill. I like this bill because it will give people in small-town, rural Ontario the opportunity to keep their licence and to drive on roads on which they feel comfortable and are capable of driving on. It can be restrictive, and I believe it should be restrictive. I believe that this is nothing different than someone going out and getting a G1 or G2 licence. We restrict in the first couple of years what they can do. We restrict zero alcohol no matter what your age. We restrict that you can't drive on the 400-series highways. We restrict that you can't drive after dark if you're of a certain age. We restrict all kinds of things when someone gets a new licence, and I think we should restrict things when someone starts to get older or less capable of driving; we need to restrict that as well. So the member is absolutely right in coming forward with this.

1550

I remembered my own father, who died a couple of years ago, as the honourable doctor here talked about her father—88 years old. My father died with all his wits about him, every single one of them. He drove until the day he collapsed and had to be taken to the hospital. I had to go get the car. He was still driving. But I felt comfortable, because he knew his own limitations. He knew that he drove from the little tiny community of Cardiff—population about 200—where he and my mother lived, to the bustling metropolis of Bancroft—population, I think, about 800 or 900—that had two supermarkets, a doctor, a dentist and some banks.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It was probably a little bit more than that.

Mr. Michael Prue: Sorry, I said 800; about 2,800.

That's where the community life was. That's where you had to go at least once a week to do the necessities of life. In his last four or five years of life, those were the only places. He drove to exactly the same places every single week: to the bank, to the dentist, to the doctor, to the supermarkets and back to Cardiff.

When he had to go to hospitals in faraway Peterborough—he'd have to go down there once in a while—he would hire someone to drive him.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: That's the big city.

Mr. Michael Prue: That was the big city. It was country roads, but he no longer felt safe. He would always leave first thing in the morning to make sure he

could get back before it got too dark, because he did have trouble seeing at night. He was not regulated, but I don't see anything that would have been wrong with him being regulated.

Now, he lived in fear, every two years, that he wasn't going to get his licence, because he vowed, and his vow came absolutely true, that he was going to live in his house till he died, and that is the reality. He lived his dream. That's what happened. To take away his licence would have caused him undue hardship.

This is a good thing. The province needs to get on with this. I ask my colleagues opposite, Liberals all, to do something about this, to help your colleague from London-Fanshawe push his private member's bill through.

I said the same thing to the member from Niagara Falls last week, who had brought his bill forward four separate times only to see nothing happen with it. You have a caucus. You have the strength in numbers. You have to stand up for your rights. You have to tell cabinet, and in particular the Premier, that you want some of your bills to go through and you have to get agreement on those bills.

I know that we in the New Democratic Party, through our House leader—and I'm sure the Conservatives through their House leader as well—are more than willing to negotiate to let all of this happen, but it needs some impetus on the government side to help push these through.

We have good ideas in this place. All members in this place have good ideas. It's up to you to make them happen, and it's not good enough for the member for London-Fanshawe to come forward again with a good idea and see it simply die.

The people of Ontario, particularly older people, are relying on us to do what is right. We have that opportunity. The member from London-Fanshawe has given us that opportunity. Please don't let him down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate and pay tribute to the member from London-Fanshawe, who I think has introduced a bill that has some logical beauty to it. We all know that the human condition will make our skills improve with age, and it makes sense that, as we grow a little older, those skills will begin to diminish.

We've been able to get entry into the ability to drive down to a point where we've now got a graduated driving system, where as your skills and experience improve, you're allowed to do more and more things. For a G1, for example, you can't drive on 400-series highways, you can't drive at night, you can't drive with other teenagers in the car—a few restrictions that allow you to get used to driving an automobile—and eventually you move to a full licence.

Now, as our life expectancy has soared as a society—we've seen the ending of mandatory retirement in Ontario—people in the province of Ontario are simply living longer and living more actively, and part of that

activity is the ability to continue to be mobile, to do things outside their home and to live independently.

I think the approach that is being brought forward by the member from London–Fanshawe really exemplifies how a private member's bill should be dealt with. It was brought forward once. Suggestions were made by the opposition parties as to how the bill could be improved. He went back, he made those improvements and he brought it forward again.

So certainly I think it makes a lot of sense that this bill receive the support of all members of the House and that the amendments be made to the Highway Traffic Act after it has been through the committee system, because it's just going to promote a greater means of transportation for all our citizens, and for those for whom, in a sense, we've been dealing with an "all or nothing." Either you can drive or you can't; either you lose your licence or you keep your licence. What this bill is suggesting is that as your skills may be diminished but not gone entirely, there should be allowances made within the system that allow a licence to be granted, for example, where you aren't allowed to drive on the highways but you are allowed to drive within town. You are allowed to drive to the grocery store, to the doctor's, to wherever you need to go, rather than have that licence taken away from you because you weren't capable of passing the criteria that have been established for driving on the 400 series of highways.

It makes sense if you look at some of the other jurisdictions in the country that have implemented similar bills to this. You look at Quebec, Manitoba, and Newfoundland and Labrador, and they've all got special licences that restrict drivers to daytime only. So certainly there's an example of where this actually has been put into place and is working well. I can see no reason from any of the debate that I've heard this afternoon, from either the government side or the opposition side, why the suggestions being put forward by the member from London–Fanshawe wouldn't work to the advantage of all Ontarians when it comes to their ability to drive, when it comes to their ability to remain mobile in their own communities in the way that seniors are still allowed to do in other provinces throughout Confederation.

It really takes the ageism factor out. It's a skills-based, ability-based system. I think that most people in this House would agree that that is the fair way to go.

I would urge all members to support this bill and I once again express my admiration for the member for London–Fanshawe for bringing forward a very sensible bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for London–Fanshawe has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to thank all the people who spoke in support of this bill.

Thanks to the member from Leeds–Grenville for when he mentioned about changing the age factor, because as I mentioned, I listened to the opposite side, and if we can

make a change, I have an open mind on many different issues.

I also want to thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, who mentioned her father's story. Your father's story is still repeating itself across the province of Ontario on a daily basis. I have a lot of seniors come to my office and complain about this issue. They don't want to go on Highway 401, they don't want to go on the 400-series highways, but they want to have the driver's licence to go to the grocery store and to their doctor.

Also, to the member from York West, I have a lot of seniors get together on a regular basis to go to the mall, to have a coffee, to socialize, to walk, because it's important for them to keep that companionship going. Without a driver's licence, they cannot commute. They cannot do anything.

To the member from Simcoe North, I know we have a lot of obstacles in our system, but as a matter of fact, this one here will help a lot of people be able to commute and be able to do the work by themselves.

To the member from Oakville, I thank you for your talk and support.

To the member from Beaches–East York, you're right. Many people, especially in a rural area, in a small community, cannot commute because they don't have the transit system. Without a car, without driving, they cannot do anything. To phone a taxi—in some areas they have no taxis. There's maybe one taxi for the whole town, so they have to wait sometimes a day or two to be able to go see a doctor, to go to the mall for shopping or to look after themselves.

So I think it's very important for all of us, for all the people of this province, to have the ability to have the optional restricted driver's licence—if they wish to drive on the highway, they can; if they don't, they don't—instead of combining all levels of drivers in one driver's licence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has now expired.

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO CALEDONIA ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'ENQUÊTE PUBLIQUE RELATIVE À LA SITUATION EXISTANT À CALEDONIA

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll first deal with ballot item number 34, standing in the name of Mr. Chudleigh.

Mr. Chudleigh has moved second reading of Bill 73, An Act to provide for a public inquiry to discover the truth about the provincial role in the ongoing dispute on the Douglas Creek Estates property in Caledonia.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.
We'll vote on the item after we do the next two ballot items.

WORLD WATER DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA JOURNÉE MONDIALE DE L'EAU

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The next ballot item is ballot item number 35.

Mr. Kular has moved second reading of Bill 105, An Act to proclaim World Water Day in Ontario.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Kular.

Mr. Kuldip Kular: I think the bill should be referred to general government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): So ordered. The bill will be referred to the general government committee.

MICHELLE KROHN ACT (MODIFIED DRIVER'S LICENCE), 2010

LOI MICHELLE KROHN DE 2010 SUR LES PERMIS DE CONDUIRE MODIFIÉS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The final ballot item today is ballot item number 36.

Mr. Ramal has moved second reading of Bill 97, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to create an optional modified driver's licence.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Ramal.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'd like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Agreed. The bill will be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. So ordered.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1601 to 1606.

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO CALEDONIA ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'ENQUÊTE PUBLIQUE RELATIVE À LA SITUATION EXISTANT À CALEDONIA

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Chudleigh has moved second reading of Bill 73.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted

Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield

Hardeman, Ernie

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Balkissoon, Bas
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Jaczek, Helena

Kular, Kuldip
Mangat, Amrit
McNeely, Phil
Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony

Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 5; the nays are 22.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business have now been completed.

Orders of the day? Minister without portfolio.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Phillips has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1609.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York–Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough–Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London–Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud–Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke–Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley–Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa–Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton–Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough–Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Elliott, Christine (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Oakville Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina Cambridge London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craitor
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Bob Delaney, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Leeanna Pendergast, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Steve Clark, Helena Jaczek
Kuldip Kular, Dave Levac
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Reza Moridi
Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Joe Dickson
Sylvia Jones, Amrit Mangat
Norm Miller, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Mario Sergio
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
Wayne Arthurs, M. Aileen Carroll
France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craitor
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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